

Chapter 1  
You're my only Hope  
Where: ???  
When: ???

*I'm glad I didn't put the jacket on!*

Lysanias found himself standing in a barren land, sand all around him. The air was as dry as any he had ever felt, and already he felt himself starting to sweat. Heat shimmered all around him, rising up off the sand like a wave. Looking up he squinted into the suns.

*Wait, suns plural? I wonder if sun magic will be more potent?*

"I won't ask you again, where are those droids?" demanded someone to his left.

"What the heck is a-" he started to say, and looked over in that direction. He froze, as did the six other men who were now looking over at him. At least, they could be men. *Or giant bugs. Look at those faces! Or are they helmets?*

The men were totally encased in white armor from their heads to their toes, if they had toes. Lysanias didn't envy them, running around in such outfits in this heat. All of them carried dark, tubular objects he decided must be guns of some kind. Beyond them was a sort of low dome that he saw led underground, but in front of that he saw two other people. Both somewhat older looking, or young compared to him, but he could feel their terror from here. They were clinging to each other and had their eyes closed. It was a man and a woman, maybe a married couple? What they were doing out in this wasteland Lysanias couldn't begin to guess. But he could tell one thing.

*Those people are afraid for their lives!*

"Where did you come from?" the one with the biggest gun demanded. He turned, the gun now pointing at Lysanias instead of the two he had been threatening. The others were looking around, and with good reason. There was nothing in any direction he could have hidden behind; no trees, buildings, holes in the ground, nothing. "I thought I told you to keep a lookout!"

"I was, captain! He came out of nowhere I swear it!"

"He just sprang into existence, is that it?"

"You want to watch my video feed? He wasn't there, then he was!"

"Oh, I'll be watching it later, believe me. You, over with these two and on your knees! If you know anything about two droids, you better speak up now!"

*I don't even know what a droid is. Much less two of them.*

"Look at that stuff he's wearing," one of the others said. "Never seen armor like that before. He some kind of bounty hunter?"

"Is that a sword and shield?" another asked in amazement. "Where's this guy been living? He doesn't even have a blaster."

*What's a blaster? Apart from something that blasts something, that much I could figure out on my own thank you very much.*

"I don't know and I don't care. Over with these two, and keep your hands where I can see them!" ordered the captain. He gestured with the gun.

*Great. What have I stumbled into this time? I suppose I should be thankful Inari didn't find an even smaller box to stick me in as a joke. They don't seem willing to talk, I'll have to fight them and get the story from the other two. But how? Can't chi-block these people, not with the armor they're wearing. Six of them, one on that weird giant lizard thing, and all of them with guns. My armor can take a hit but if they get me in the head or the leg, it's all over. To say nothing of a stray shot hitting one of those two. Can't metal bend them, the armor doesn't look metal. Can't fire bend, these people are freaked out enough I just appeared out of nowhere. I start throwing fire around they'll really lose it. Plus if these guys are connected to the shadow avatar, they'll know I'm here.*

"I said move!"

"I heard you." He took a step forward. *Let's at least get them out of harm's way, shall we? Mountain spirit?*

*Let us be the shield for these people.* It shimmered, appearing between the armored men and the helpless figures before them.

*Agreed. I just hope hitting them really hard with the flat of my blade can knock them around and get them to back off. I could just smash through them all of course, my blade will cut any sort of armor. I hope. Haven't really tested with 255 "battle power" means around here. I don't want to kill them, for all I know they're in the right and these two have done something to deserve this. Stealing these "droids" they keep going on about. Knocking them out is one thing, but I can't take back outright murdering them. If only I had, like, a stick to hit them with. Yeah, that would do the job, a stick just seems like the thing to use. Still, they've already seen me appear out of nowhere, just wish I was wearing the sprint shoes right now and not the wall ring. These people don't look like they're magic users. Still, I should be fast enough with just my identity gift.*

Lysanias spirit stepped, covering the distance between himself and the captain in the blink of an eye. As his gun came up Lysanias' shield came down, sharpened edge first. His other hand went to his sword, intending to draw it as he pulled his shield back. Both were somewhat surprised to find the barrel of the gun being sheared off, but that didn't stop him from drawing the sword.

The trooper to his left, next to the one on the big lizard brought up his gun and fired, but somehow Lysanias had no trouble swatting the bolt out of the air with the shield.

*Thank you increased reflexes?*

The trooper that just got his gun chopped in half and the one several steps behind him now acted, the further away one taking a step to the right to try and not shoot his squad mate. That one tried to whack Lysanias with the butt of their gun, but didn't take into account the mountain spirit he couldn't see. It struck out as they were right next to each other, hitting them in the arm closest to them. That staggered him in surprise, even if he didn't realize he was being hit, rattling around in even high tech armor after taking a punch hurts. Naturally this made him step just enough to the right in pain that the guy shooting at Lysanias shot him in the back.

"Sorry, sorry!" said the man, wincing. Not as much as the guy that just got a blaster bolt in the back though, he went flying into Lysanias from the force of the blast. Lysanias winced himself, he could feel the man's shock and surprise, doing an air bender rotation to get out of the way.

"Did you just shoot a guy on your side in the back?"

"I didn't mean to!"

The stormtrooper on the lizard thing had his gun up and pulled the trigger, but again Lysanias saw it coming and raised his shield. Again it bounced off.

"Wait!" he cried, holding his hands up. "This man's been shot! We have to get him medical treatment right away!"

The one closest to the two terrified people was about to fire, but relaxed his trigger finger. "Wait, what?"

"Hold your fire, hold your fire!" Lysanias insisted, turning back to the man. *Will they just shoot me in the back?* "Hey, are you okay?"

"I'm hit pretty bad," the man admitted as Lysanias looked him over. His helmet had gone spinning off when he fell, and the man was clearly in pain. The armor almost looked *melted*, not shot as though with a projectile as he would have guessed. *That's how the guns back home worked, as Don and Everest explained it.* Almost as though whatever that gun had fired was incredibly hot. *Did it burn him as well as through that armor? I wouldn't want to take a blast like that full strength. Good thing my shield cover and shield back are separated, it might be nearly indestructible but it would still get too hot to hold if you heated it up. The heat would have gone into my dimension, so I'm fine!*

"What do you care?" asked the one now to his left, gun still raised in case this

was a trick. He took a step closer.

"Care if this man *dies*?" Lysanias asked him, aghast. "Of course I care if he dies! Why wouldn't I?" He turned back to the man. "Let's get that armor off, take a look at how bad the wound is." He started looking for how the armor went on, and figured he might have to take off the arm pieces first.

"You really do care," the man exclaimed, surprise taking the place of pain for a second.

"Yeah. Come help me with this, I don't see how it comes off!" Lysanias called behind him.

"Er, captain?" the one next to the lizard riding one asked hesitantly. He still had his gun up, but it was wavering.

"Just do as he says, and someone get a medical kit!"

"We didn't bring a medical kit," complained another. "We didn't think we would need it."

"Oh, that's just great! Ow, easy, man!" The one started taking the armor off and Lysanias watched, interested. He put the sword away and set his shield down. "I don't suppose you have any medical equipment?" he asked, looking over at the terrified couple.

"They-they-they were going to kill us!" the man protested. "Why should we help them?"

"Look, I'm really sorry about that, but we need to find those droids. You know who's up there? Darth Vader. He gave us our orders himself. He'll kill us all if we don't come back with *something*."

*Wait, what? Is this another Cid situation? That sounds familiar. In more than one way...*

"You're *sorry*!" The man looked like he couldn't believe his ears.

"Well, yeah," said the one nearest them. "You think we like running around, waving our guns in people's faces?"

"You seemed to be getting some enjoyment out of it earlier!"

"Yes, well..." The man seemed embarrassed, not an easy task wearing a bug helmet.

"Go get some bandages," the woman told him. "And some antiseptic."

"Now you want to help them?"

"Harder to shoot someone that bandaged up your captain," she reasoned.

He grumbled something and slowly got up. The guns twitched a little but stayed down as he ducked into the house thing.

"We're so dead," said one.

"Ah, that's a pretty bad wound," Lysanias told the man as his back was exposed. *And I can't do anything about it. Healing him would draw way too much comment at this point.*

"Hey, I'm still alive," the guy told him. "Usually we get mowed down by the dozens, and no one cares."

"Yeah, you would think our armor would help, but not so much," said another.

"Why is that?" asked one.

"Don't know," another shrugged. "You know how many of these things they had to make? They probably went with the cheapest contractor they could find to crank them out."

"Typical 'imperial' efficiency," complained another.

The others wholeheartedly agreed.

"You got that right. Man, I could use a drink," said the wounded one.

"Speaking of heavy drink, this Darth Vader of yours, he wouldn't happen to be a dwarf, would he?"

"A what?" they all looked at him like he was crazy. "Not unless he's a dwarf that climbed into that suit of his. He's taller than I am. Why?"

"It's just a funny coincidence, I guess. I met a Dar Thavader back home. I guess it sounds a little different now that I say it out loud. Weird."

"Dwarf, you've got to be kidding me." They all shook their heads.

"So you were really going to swing that sword around huh?" one asked after a moment of silence.

"I was just going to try knocking you out. You know, bash you in the head with it, no edge. I didn't want to kill you."

"You really wouldn't have hurt us? I would have shot you..." He seemed a little hesitant.

"Stick would have worked better for that," another remarked.

"You know, I was thinking the very same thing! And no, I wouldn't have. Not seriously, anyway."

"Why?"

This gave him pause. "What? Well I didn't know what was going on, did I? Those two could be wanted criminals for all I know."

"We're not!" the woman insisted.

"They're... probably not," the trooper admitted. "They're just in the wrong place at the wrong time."

"I see."

"I found some stuff," said the man, returning. "Let me see that wound."

"Thank you," said the trooper.

"Ha!"

"Now what, captain?" asked one as he winced from something being splashed on the wound. The man then started to wrap a bandage around his chest.

"I wish I knew, 386. Say, where did you come from, anyway? You couldn't have just appeared out of nowhere."

"I don't suppose I could explain without explaining by saying you wouldn't believe me, could I?"

"I don't think so, no."

"Dang, your gun really got sheared off," one of the troopers discovered, picking it up. "Didn't you just hit it with the shield?"

"I was just trying to knock it away from me, guess I didn't realize my own strength. The shield does have a sharp edge though." He held it up and the trooper took his helmet off, because he couldn't see very well in it. *Now that I'm not in a reality where I have to do absurd levels of damage to hurt anything I'll have to be careful of that. My mountain spirit almost killed somebody by accident, hitting them full force. My strength should be even greater than that, now. What would my sword actually do to someone, with all these bonuses I picked up? Plus I can't miss...*

"Oh yeah, I see it now. Guns were probably made like the armor. Cheap. It's no wonder. Guys, come look at the detail on this shield! It's a work of art!" The others crowded around, looking at it.

*These guys look an awful lot alike. But the others don't, and they aren't questioning it so I guess that's normal?*

"Where is that? Not around here, that's a mountain. This planet is mostly desert," one asked. "It really does look good. You make that?"

"A long way from here," he answered. "In my homeland of Pyre. And yes, yes I did." *Though not in the way you might be thinking of.*

"Never heard of it. But then, there's a lot of planets out there I've never heard of." *Planets? Wait, is this more like Gogo's reality, where they move between worlds rather than just places on their world? That's going to make the search interesting.*

"It's so crazy, I watched you block two blaster bolts with it, and there's still not a scratch. What's it made of?"

"A very rare metal, actually," he admitted. "Crazy expensive but nearly indestructible once set up." *Course I just turned some other metal into it, but they don't*

*need to know that.*

"I can see why you would use it, you're really good with it to swat our shots out of the air like that."

"Oh, thanks!" *Honestly, I don't think you guys are all that good to begin with, but I'm not telling you that.*

"That's about the best I can do," said the man, finishing up.

"Thanks," said the man gratefully. "And I really am sorry about before."

"And I ask again, now what?" asked the one that had asked before.

"The droids aren't here," said the man. "Like I said. We bought them yesterday from some Jawas. They were babbling nonsense so I told my nephew to take them into town this morning and have their memories wiped. When I got up he was gone, the speeder was gone, the droids were gone. Put two and two together my friends. Roughing us up won't change that."

"Crap, if their memories are erased..." said one.

"We'll really catch it," agreed the other.

"Wait, how do we know he's not lying?" asked another.

"Why would he protect two *droids*?" asked the captain. "You searched the place, were there two bedrooms?"

"Uh, yeah, I guess."

"And did this nephew show up on your scans of the area?"

"No. No other lifeforms but these two for miles. Apart from this guy we somehow missed."

"Don't worry about it," Lysanias told them. "I move pretty fast."

"Yeah, I didn't even see you move when you chopped that gun in half. Kapow!" He made a chopping motion with one hand. "That was wild!"

"Yes."

"There you are then. What's the nearest settlement to this area?"

"Anchor head," replied one.

"We'll head there. Ask around, see if anyone's seen the kid. Can't be that many places to have a droid's memory wiped."

"With respect sir, you're heading back to the ship for medical treatment."

"No, I'm not. Help me up." He put a hand out.

"Sir, please!"

"No, just put my armor back on, it'll help hold the bandage in place. If I abandon the search now I'll leave you all to take the blame if we don't find the droids. I won't do that. Now get my armor on, that's an order!"

"Aw, captain..." Lysanias felt a burst of pride from the man who started buckling the armor back on.

"Necessity will force us back here if we find out you've lied to us," the captain told them as he was encased again. "I don't know why Vader wants these droids, but he seemed rather insistent about the whole thing. I will take you to him rather than have my men punished, let Vader deal with you instead. Just a friendly warning."

*Redirect his anger, in other words? Sounds like a Kefka, how far away is this reality from the one I just left? I mean stupid helmets, an empire, a crazy guy who will murder you if you don't fulfill your mission...*

"Thank you," said the woman. "I think I understand what you're trying to say."

"I hope you do. Men, let's move out!"

The soldiers moved off, leaving the three alone and looking at each other.

After the troopers had move off, the woman finally broke down, grabbing onto the man and sobbing. "Oh Owen, I was so scared!"

"I know, Beru, I know. I was too. Stranger, we owe you our thanks. Come in out of the sun and let us offer you something to drink, at least."

"That would be wonderful, thank you." *Are these two really at the heart of all this?*

*They don't look like the heroic type. And if they had special powers I'm sure they would have used them on those soldiers. But they're who I found first so I guess roll with it?*

Looking them over they were past middle aged, the man in a light robe. He had short brown hair and a somewhat scruffy beard. The woman also had short brown hair, and was wearing a blue shirt with a very wide collar. He guided the woman down the steps, and Lysanias followed. The rooms below were small, probably to make them easier to cool in the daytime, and the man offered him a seat at the table in the kitchen they passed. "I'll be along," he explained.

"Please, take your time."

A few moments later he returned. "She's packing some things, so we have a few minutes," he announced. "I have no idea where we'll go, but until this whole droid thing blows over we'll have to disappear for a while."

"That's probably for the best. I'll help in any way I can."

"You've done a lot of us already... Let me get you that drink. Hope you like blue milk."

"Can't say I've ever tried it."

"No? Must have just landed, what were you doing- no, I won't pry." He opened up a box that had cold coming out of it and poured Lysanias a glass of blue liquid.

"Thanks. Are either of you injured? I actually do have some-" *how do I put this?* "-medical training. I didn't want to help those soldiers too much, but I'll be happy to look you over if they hurt you before I got here." He took a sip of his "blue" milk, and it wasn't bad.

"No, no, just waved those blasters around." He dropped heavily into the chair at the end of the table. "I think they really would have shot us though, you know that? Like it would have changed anything." He slammed a fist onto the table. "A thousand curses on that Kenobi, what has he gotten us into this time?"

"Kenobi?"

He waved it off. "Those droids the storm troopers were looking for? They must have been stolen from him. Naturally they would wind up here, because why not!? Then Luke hears the name from them, and the next morning he's gone? He didn't do as I asked, went to erase their memory, he never does what I tell him! Why should this time be any different? I should have just melted them down on the spot but I doubt that would have changed anything."

"Probably not," he agreed. "Events here were set in motion long ago, no doubt."

"Ha! You don't know the half of it, or do you? The way you moved, are you a jedi?"

"Not familiar with that term," he admitted.

"But you can use the force?"

*Ah, does he mean do I have special powers?* "You could say that."

He grunted. "I see, like I said, I won't pry. Being a jedi in this day and age, well, I wouldn't admit it outright either. But... Is that how you knew to come here when you did? I mean we're in the middle of nowhere out here!"

"That's part of it yes. Look, I'm not sure how much I should really tell you-"

The man held up a hand. "Wait, you hear that?"

"The soldiers are back already?" Lysanias went for the sword again.

"No, no, it's a speeder. I think Luke is back. Good, we can leave right away."

A moment later there was a voice yelling from above, and the man called up to him. "Down here, Luke!"

"Uncle Owen, you're okay!" exclaimed a young man coming down the stairs.

*Ah, now this looks more like the hero type. Young. Energetic. Ready to take on the world. Just one problem.* "You're not a girl," he blurted.

Luke stared at him.

## Chapter 2

Just you Reconsider

Where: Lysanias still doesn't know

When: A second after his proclamation about Luke

"Of course I'm not!" Luke agreed, knowing that under his clothes he was all man. He had no female garments underneath, never had put on any, and never would. Why the very idea he could be a girl was a crazy one, and this stranger, who was he to insinuate such? "Why should I be?"

"I suppose two is too small a sample size to draw any conclusions from," Lysanias agreed. "I just would have sworn..."

"Sworn what?"

"Never mind that," Owen told the pair. "Luke, are you okay? You didn't run into any trouble out there?"

"Yeah, I'm fine. That droid ran off last night, I managed to find it though. The smaller one. You'll never guess who I ran into?!"

Owen rolled his eyes. "Ben?"

"Ben Ki- oh, you guessed. What's going on, who is this?"

"This man, I still don't know his name actually, saved our lives a few minutes ago. Storm troopers were here looking for the droids. Would have killed us if he hadn't shown up."

"I'm actually not surprised. They totally blew up that sand crawler we got the droids from. One of the jawas must have told them who the droids got sold to, and they came looking."

"I see. Well, your aunt is packing some things, we'll be leaving in a few minutes. If you want to go and help her-"

"Wait, leaving? What about the harvest? Yesterday you were all "harvest, harvest, harvest" but now we have to rush off?"

"Didn't you hear me? We would have been killed! Those troopers will be back once they realize you didn't go into town like I told them. We need to get as far away from here as we can until they stop looking for those droids."

"Then there's only one thing we can do," he decided. "I have to go with Ben and lead them off. If the empire sees them leaving with me, off planet, you'll be safe."

"Or you could come with us, Ben can take the droids with him when *he* leaves, and you can stay here and help with the harvest once this is all over."

"AH, you see! He only cares about the harvest," he told Lysanias, pointing a finger. "He doesn't care about me, he never did!"

"Actually, if what I'm feeling from him is true, it's concern for you that guides him now. He is very afraid right now, of what I don't know, but probably any of his family being killed over a couple of droids." *Whatever those are.*

"It's true Luke, I'm just trying to look out for you. This moisture farm is your legacy, not anything out there in the stars."

"Why don't I believe you?"

"Wait, what farm?" Lysanias asked.

"Moisture. Come here, I'll show you."

"I thought we were in a hurry?" Luke grumped.

"So go help your Aunt pack!"

"Fine!" He stalked off.

Lysanias downed the rest of his milk and followed the man out. "I'm Lysanias, by the way."

"Ah, you do have a name. Owen Lars. That was Luke, and my wife is Beru. Nice to meet you."

"Likewise." The two shook hands and went back up into the desert suns.

"See that tower looking thing there? That's a moisture 'vaporator."

"You mean a moisture condenser? You're not trying to put water into the atmosphere, you're trying to take it out, right?"

"Heh, yeah, don't know why we call it that, actually. Anyway, harvest time we have to collect the water they've accumulated and bring it back to the main tank."

"Which you then sell to people?"

"Exactly. Two suns, water is worth more than gold out here. Can't drink gold. And of course we do grow some vegetables and things with the water for our own use."

"Sure, sure, but am I missing something?"

"Don't know, what's the trouble?"

"Well, this all seems a bit tedious. You have-" *what did Gogo call them?* "-space ships right? That can go to other worlds?"

"Sure."

"Worlds that have more water than this?"

"Yeah."

"So wouldn't it be more cost effective to go to one of those, siphon off some water, and bring it back? I mean you're trying to pull water out of desert air. How expensive is space travel? It can't be more expensive than running these machines day in and day out." *Though they could probably use that stuff the one factory was running off of. Sun power... What did they call it? Solar power?*

"Uh..."

"I mean how can any place be short of anything as soon as travel to other worlds becomes an option? There must be places made of nothing *but* water. They would probably kill for a bit of sand, or rock. I bet you could trade with places like that easily."

"The thing you have to understand-"

"Owen!" shouted Luke from the house. "We're ready to go."

"I'll tell you later." He turned back. "Okay!"

"Look, Ben is waiting for me back at the site of the Jawa attack with the droids. I need to go back there."

"Why? Just leave with us, let him deal with the droid thing. I hate to be out the money but the Jawas got killed, so I figure fair is fair."

"Come on Uncle Owen!"

"You have to let him go sometime," Beru said, coming up behind him.

"No I don't."

"Actually," Lysanias interrupted, raising a hand. "I'm afraid that may be the case. I was sent here to recruit people, and Luke is obviously one of those people I need for my mission."

"What mission?" Lars demanded.

"Saving your entire reality. Look, there isn't time to explain but know that even apart from those soldiers, you are in grave danger. Everyone is. Saving you was just a bonus, that's clear to me now. Unless I can gather the right people eventually all life everywhere will be destroyed by a being I call the shadow avatar. It has its sights here, and it will do whatever it takes to destroy every last person, place, and thing it can. It comes from another reality, just like I do, and that's why I'm here. To warn you, and to help stop it."

"You're crazy," Owen decided. "Saving our lives or not, that's a lot of nonsense."

"Is it?" Beru asked sadly. "Owen, think. These two droids could have landed anywhere on the planet. You know how big it is. But they land practically on our doorstep? Talking about Ben and obviously carrying some very important information for the rebellion. Why else would the empire be sniffing around our homes? Then Luke just happens to find him out there, and avoids being around when the soldiers were here? Then this man just happens to appear, out of nowhere I might remind you, and saves our lives. He doesn't kill a single trooper, in fact goes out of his way not to. Did you see the size of his sword? Even calls a halt to them shooting at him, they listen, and then *apologize* to us. Don't you feel it? We should be dead. We should be. I keep looking at

my hands thinking they're a dead woman's hands. But we're not. We're still alive. That *means* something."

"It's not the size of the sword, it's how you use it," he muttered.

"Oh, that's what you're going to fixate on? Typical male, honestly." She threw her hands in the air, but then walked over to take Luke's. "Luke, you need to do what's right for you. We've raised you the best we can, and now it's time to see if we did a good job or not. Just... when it's all over, promise you'll come back and tell us you're all right."

"I will Aunt Beru. I promise."

"And you." She whirled on Lysanias. "I want you to keep him safe. Bring him back to us, okay?"

"I will be his shield," Lysanias promised, holding it up. "His blows shall become my blows, my life will be lost before his. You have my word."

She held his gaze a moment, then nodded. "Somehow, I believe you. You have the oddest eyes, but I trust them. Come on, Owen. We'll take the other speeder and disappear a few days. We needed a vacation anyway, maybe you can get some use out of *your* sword." She winked.

*Oh my!*

"Fine. I suppose that's all we can do."

"Wait, you said gold. Would having some help?"

He barked a laugh. "Sure, any sort of heavy element is tradable. You have some?"

"Oh, I know where I can get some. And I am interfering with your lives, I figure this is the least I can do to make it up to you." *Apart from, you know, you being alive now and not dead.* He looked around and found a rock that was a good size, then picked it up and held it between two hands. His power easily turned it into a gold rock, and then shatter it into coin like disks to make it easier to transport. All three mouths were hanging open.

"Pretty sure the force couldn't do *that* back in my day!" Owen finally said, recovering. "How in the world?" He took one and looked it over. "Yeah, it's gold all right."

"100% pure, you have my guarantee. My promise means a little more now, perhaps? Take them and go. We have a destiny to fulfill." He handed most over, but pocketed a few, just in case.

The two wordlessly gathered up the coins, hugged Luke goodbye, and vanished into a garage where a floating vehicle emerged from. They waved and sped off.

"So, who are you again?" Luke asked, looking a "coin" over himself. "I've heard of people out there turning music into gold, but this is ridiculous."

"Lysanias. Traveler from afar, here to save your entire reality. Let's get going, but I'll hold off on the whole story for now. This "Ben" will have to hear it too, and I'd rather not tell the story twice."

"Fine, whatever. This way to my speeder."

So the pair cut across the still desert sand, where Luke began to sing.

"Yay yaway hey naa yaaa aaaway nay aya awaaya!" Which in his language meant "I just got away from my aunt and uncle's farm and all it took was them almost getting killed by storm troopers."

Other than that they didn't speak, the thing was basically open to the air which was weird, he would have thought enclosing it against the harsh rays of the sun and then cooling the space would have been the thing to do. So the wind rushed past them, making conversation difficult, and finally they stopped in front of a smoldering ruin of a large metal vehicle. A golden man and a bearded man in a robe were burning bodies, while a squat metal cylinder with a domed top stood on odd feet nearby.

"Were they all right?" asked the man, clearly concerned.

"Luckily, yes. Thanks to him."

"And you might you be, stranger?" asked the man as Lysanias climbed out of the

speeder.

"Lysanias. Nice to meet you."

"I'm Obi-Wan Kinobi. Likewise."

"Obi-Wan? What's your middle name?"

"Tansoup."

"Obi-Wan Tansoup Kinobi?"

"One in the same," he said, as if trying to stifle a laugh. He had been saving that one for *years*, you understand, and this man had played right into his hands. "You saved his aunt and uncle? I'm glad to hear it. You..." He looked Lysanias over. "I have a strange feeling about you. Can you use the force?"

"People keep asking me that. Let's just say I can learn anything you can teach me about "the force," and may be able to do some things that can surprise you."

"He turned a rock into gold! Right in front of us! Look at this!" He handed the coin over. "And wait until he tells you about the reason he's here. You should get a kick out of it."

"I suppose training two people wouldn't be any harder than training one. Perhaps the force guided you here?" He looked the coin over and handed it back.

*If the force is a small goddess with fox ears and a tendency to play practical jokes on people, sure.*

"My aunt and uncle left the farm, we should get going too if we're going to Alderon. The sooner people see these droids leaving the sooner they can get back to their lives in safety."

"Decided to come with me after all, eh? I knew you would. Let's finish burning these bodies and we can be on our way."

"Greetings sir," said the golden droid, coming over to him. "I am C3-P0. Human/cyborg relations."

"Cyborg?"

"One who has had a part of their body replaced with an artificial equivalent."

"Oh, I've met someone like that!" *They tried to kill me back home, because they were under the influence of a shadow. So that sort of thing is done here as well?*

"I'm sure you have sir, you humans are so fragile, after all."

He looked at the being a moment. *I don't feel any life energy from this person.* "You're an artificial being yourself, aren't you?"

"Why yes sir. I'm surprised you would have to ask."

"I just saw a bunch of guys in white armor, you could have been just wearing gold armor. I didn't want to assume."

"Why thank you sir, I believe that's the nicest thing anyone has ever said to me. If I may say so, sir, I'm having trouble telling what language you're speaking. I am fluent in over 6 million forms of communication, and I am understanding you perfectly, but yet my processors cannot return a match for your lexicon. May I know the name you call it?"

"It's called Enochian."

"Thank you, sir. I shall file it away for future reference. My main function is as a translator, I'd be fascinated to learn more about this language as it seems to be all languages and none, all at once."

"There is a reason for that," he promised. "I'll be happy to discuss it with you when we get a quiet moment. Just remind me."

"Of course sir. Thank you sir."

"Hi, I'm R2-D2!" chirped the little one, rolling over.

"Nice to meet you, R2-D2. What sort of things do you do?"

"Oh, basically anything you need extra computer power for," he replied modestly. "Spacecraft navigation, system diagnostics, a little on the fly hacking. I do it all. I'm basically a rolling general purpose CPU."

"Sounds pretty exciting." Lysanias had no idea what any of that was.

"Keeps me pretty busy," they agreed. "Especially since that princess put the

message and Death Star plans inside me. It's been non-stop since then. Even my circuits can get a little worn, you know."

"Are you having a conversation with that R2 unit?" Luke asked, looking between them and Lysanias.

"Shouldn't I?"

"But it's just beeps and boops. How do you understand it?"

"Beeps and boops?"

"Even I must admit to being impressed sir," C3-P0 told him. "Your command of his syntax is extraordinary. For a human."

"Like I said, my language is a bit peculiar. I'll explain later."

"Nice talking to you," said R2-D2. "I'm going back to just standing around. No hands, you see?"

"I can see how that would be a problem."

They rolled away, and Lysanias looked around for something to do. He caught Obi-Wan's eye, who shook his head and went back to carrying bodies to the fire they had going.

In the end there wasn't much to salvage, and Luke said another sand crawler would be along at some point to strip it down or repair it, if they could. Any other droids, which Lysanias now realized meant the artificial beings like C3-P0, had been smashed to pieces.

"What a waste," Lysanias lamented.

"I agree, sir." C3-P0 stood next to him, no doubt lamenting the loss of his people's lives.

"Should we do anything for them? Do you perform any sort of last rites?"

"Last rites? For an android?" They sounded as shocked as an artificial voice could. "No one has ever even suggested such a thing to me before. Even in jest. To have even had the thought... Sir, may I have the honor of shaking your hand?" They stuck their hand out.

"Of course." He shook it solemnly.

"You're a weird guy," Luke told him, looking like he would rather lose a hand than shake hands with a droid.

"What? He's standing right there, and he can think, and reason, and I'm sure if I took my sword out and slashed him to pieces he would try to get away so as to not be killed. Thus he's alive, because only alive things would try to avoid dying, and should be treated the same as any other living being." *And back home the remnants as we called them, the artificial beings from the world before the chaos moon, were considered to be alive. So why wouldn't these 'droids'? They seem to run along the same lines, from what I saw at the factory. C3-P0 here wouldn't even stand out that much on my world. He would just be another weird looking remnant.*

"I would sir, I do not crave oblivion."

"You see?"

"But he's just a droid."

"So?"

"I can't deal with this right now." He stalked off.

"In any case, there's nothing specific," the droid told him. "But I do appreciate your asking."

With the site cleaned up and Lysanias offering a prayer to whatever Gods or Goddesses watched over this reality to guide the souls that had been returned home, the group was off again. They headed to a "space port" to find a ship that could take them off world, again not managing much conversation due to the wind. But Lysanias wasn't idle. He had been feeling out Obi-Wan and Luke, finding them to feel similar in some way to his senses. Obi-Wan of course felt more "refined" while Luke simply felt

like he was hearing an echo of Obi-Wan's abilities or perhaps seeing them through a still pond. But they were there.

*Perhaps this is that "force" they were talking about? I'd need a demonstration but I feel some kind of power in them, and it must relate to things I can do already for me to feel it like this.*

They stopped on a ridge above the place, and Obi-Wan was saying something about how it was the armpit of the universe and they should be careful, but he felt that was more for Luke's benefit than for his. He was scouting the place out with his telescope.

"Actually, can either of you two droids see far enough to tell if there's storm troopers down there?" he asked. He was pretty sure there was, but figured they could make themselves useful as the others were just standing there like lumps. *After all, we need to make sure we're seen by them as having left, so they'll give up looking here. I thought we had stopped to do that, but apparently they just wanted to admire the scenery.*

"Let me try something sir," C3-P0 decided. He put a hand on R2-D2, who extended both a camera and a small parabolic dish of some kind, sweeping them over the place. "Ah yes, I thought his optical resolution might be better than mine. It seems there is a rather large presence there, and people are being stopped."

*So they can connect and share information by touch? Or is he touching some kind of transport area on R2 that's meant for data? Good to know.*

"I'm picking up radio chatter too," R2-D2 added. "They haven't found us yet." He made a snorty-beepy sound.

"I wonder..." Lysanias tapped a chin with his finger. "R2-D2, you are very easy to grab and run off with, no offense."

"I'm pretty heavy though," they countered.

"Okay, noted. Still, they don't know it's one droid or two, not really. To be absolutely sure, would you mind staying out of the way for now? You would still be nearby, I can put you in a bit of folded space so only C3-P0 would be out and about. This way if something happens only he'll be captured. And he doesn't have the information so while it would go poorly for him, our mission wouldn't fail. But they'll still see a droid leaving, so Luke's relatives will be safe."

"The mission is important," they agreed. "Whatever we have to do, I'm fine with."

"Thank you, I appreciate that. I'll get you out as soon as we're safely away from here. That is, if you're willing to take the risk of being a marked droid," he told C3-P0. "Right now it could be any droid on this planet. As soon as we head down there you become a suspect."

"Especially if someone knows the sort of droids that were on the ship you came down from," Obi-Wan agreed.

"One or the other of us must be risked," he decided. "It may as well be me. Proceed, sir. And sir? Thank you... For asking, rather than just assuming I would be fine with it."

"Of course." Lysanias knelt down, pulling out a contain ward. "See you soon." And R2 was gone. He straightened up. "Let's go see this space port of yours."

Chapter 3  
Scum and Villainy  
Where: Mos Esely  
When: Not long after

The port, or as far as Lysanias could tell, bar, was heavily packed with beings of all shapes and sizes. Hairy dudes, things with eyes on stalks, green guys, oh and the occasional humanoid too. But what there weren't any of was droids. A fact made clear as they entered by the guy behind the counter shouting they didn't want droids in the place.

They had gotten past the soldiers roaming the streets with a bit of bluffing and Obi-Wan doing something to the trooper's mind. Lysanias felt a bit of a buzz through his extra senses when he was telling the trooper this wasn't the droid they were looking for, and mentally noted it down to ask him about later. *Because just telling people what to believe or do would, I'm fairly certain, come in handy.*

Obi-Wan now turned to Luke, who had just told C3-P0 to wait by the speeder. "Why don't you go wait with him?" he asked. "We don't all need to be in here."

"Why do I have to watch the droid?" he whined.

"Quite honestly? I think Lysanias will get into less trouble in here than you will. And we are supposed to be seen with the droid, but we don't want him to just be grabbed up. You need to be there to head off any storm troopers that start taking too much of an interest."

"Fine. Whatever. Some adventure this is turning out to be." He left in a huff.

"Droid baby sitting."

"I'm very sorry about all this, sir," C3-P0 told him.

"What a whiner that kid is," Obi-Wan told Lysanias when he was gone. "Let's see who we can find around here."

They went inside, and the smell was very interesting as I bet you can imagine. Some upbeat music was being played over by the side wall, by beings with big heads and small mouths. *I could get into it, it's catchy enough.* Lysanias looked around at all the different forms of life here, amazed to find a place with even greater diversity than back home. *That looks like an actual demon! Red skin, horns... Do they have a demon world here? Could there be angels around? I'd love to meet angels from other realities, what would they even be like? And what could I learn from them?* In fact humans like himself seemed the minority, though there was one rather attractive lady at a booth in the back who perked up and cocked her head, looking over at him. Looking at him like a puzzle she wanted to solve, or a book she wanted to cozy up to for an evening.

*It's the beard. Don said it would work wonders, and he was right.*

They stepped up to the bar, and Obi-Wan ordered something. To his left was a vaguely humanoid being with huge eyes and gray skin. Two flashy bags hung down from where the mouth on a human would be, and Lysanias wondered at their purpose. *I mean they look sort of like-*

"I don't like your face," said the being.

*Wait, they don't like my face?* "Sorry to hear that. I could change it, if it offends you in some way."

"Are you mocking- hey, you speak my language!"

"I guess if you understood me, you're right. How about that?"

"Are you bothering my friend?" asked the guy next to the guy hassling Lysanias. He looked more human, but not by much. He had a weird nose and hair.

"If I am, I don't mean to."

"I don't like your attitude. You know, I'm wanted in twelve systems! I've got a shoot on sight order!"

"Great, maybe I'll turn you in. Is there some kind of reward for your capture?"

“HA! You, capture me?”

“Maybe he can, and maybe he can’t,” purred a female voice from behind the pair. “But both he and I are not people to mess with.” Lysanias looked around them and it was the woman he had seen taking an interest in him before. Up close he could see she had fairly short, dark hair, very sexy eyes, and goggles perched on her head. A variety of tools, the purpose of most he could only guess at, hung at her belt. Other things like a strange metal box sitting on her shoulder had das blinkenlights but that made their function no more clear. It made it no less clear, I want to be clear on that. But most importantly at the moment she had two odd looking guns pressed into the backs of his assailants, freezing them in place. They knew that feel.

“It seems you might be right,” said the original one.

“What’s he saying?”

*Oh yay! I’ve so missed that phrase, let me tell you all about it. It’s just like being home. So much so I’ll probably be in jail before the next hour is up. That’s how much like home this place will be. I’ll have to defend myself against something trying to kill me, and wind up in a holding cell. Mark my words.*

“He says you’re probably right, miss,” said the pig nosed one. “And I’d tend to agree with him. Why don’t we just move along and let you drink in peace?”

“Why don’t you do that?”

She watched the two until they had left, then swept her guns up to him. “Fairest and fallen, greetings and defiance.”

“Er, what?” He eyed them, wondering if he could metal bend them away from her.

“You are the darkness, are you not? Pretty odd, you just showing up like this but hey, anything’s possible around here. Were you not expecting me?”

“The darkness? Do you mean the shadow avatar? Wait, are you Jenny? I’ve been sent to fetch you! I’ve already found you? This is great, I’m told you can teach me a lot!”

“You... What?” She had to mentally switch gears, and the guns lowered a little.

“Wait, are you a wanderer?”

“Of course- oh, you thought I was the other guy, didn’t you?”

“That’s all I’ve ever found, but if you’re really on my side, who sent you?”

Silverstreak or Inari?”

“Inari. I don’t know the other name.”

“Ah, so you’re more a magic user, then?”

“More supernatural actually, but I do have some magic.”

“This is great!” she exclaimed, making her guns disappear somehow. She stuck out her hand. “Jenny Everywhere, nice to meet you!”

“Nice to meet you.” The shook, and she felt more and more excited. “I’m Lysanias.”

“I can finally get back on Susan’s trail, you can take me to Inari, right?”

“I sure can. Once the avatar has been unmasked here and this reality is safe, if you don’t mind waiting.”

“Nah, I’ve waited this long. Do you know Susan? I honestly don’t know how many wanderers there are, or how connected they all are.”

He shook his head. “I’ve only been doing this a short time. This is my third reality. I don’t know anyone else like myself.”

“Only three? Well, that’s okay, you do now. Oh, before I forget, I’m compelled to give you this.” She reached into her back pocket and pulled out a card, which she solemnly handed over. It was a plain white business card with black writing, and the paper was fairly stiff. The name was in gold, and it looked like very fancy writing. He took it and read.

*The character of Jenny Everywhere is available for use by anyone, with only one condition. This paragraph must be*

*included in any publication involving Jenny Everywhere,  
that others might use this property as they wish.  
All rights reversed.*

“You know,” he said after a moment of staring at it. “I think you and Inari are going to get along just fine.”

“It’s no joke.” She sighed. “I guess you don’t know. Well, it’s fine, don’t worry about it.”

“You want this back?”

“Nah, keep it. You have a problem?” She was looking over Lysanias’ shoulder and he looked up.

“I’ve found a ship that might suit us. Say goodbye to your new friend and-”

“Oh, is this a local you’ve found to help? I’m coming with you,” she announced. “This man is my ticket out of this reality and finally, *finally* getting a chance to bring some stability into my existence. You’re stuck with me.”

“You’re picking up random strangers now?” he asked. “She could be trying to scam us in some way.”

“I’ll vouch for her,” he told Obi-Wan. “I knew she was going to show up, just not quite this early into our journey.”

“Very well. I feel something odd from her too, so they’re popping up all over. Come and meet Han.”

A very hairy being led them over to a side table, where a human was lounging. When he saw them coming over he broke into a grin twelve parsecs wide, which as everyone knows is a unit of distance.

He and Obi-Wan went into the whole “if it’s a fast ship” skit, very amusing, and they agreed on a price.

“Why don’t you go with him?” Obi-Wan said to the others. “I’ll get Luke and the speeder squared away, and we’ll meet you at the ship.”

“I could put it away, like I did R2-D2.” *Or better yet, just teleport it back to their place. I bet I could lift it, with the sword’s help. Huh, wonder if I could make a ward that made things lighter so they would be easier to- nah, just put it into a contain ward and then get it out again. It’s the same ten minutes of work either way.*

“No, it’s all right. He’ll have to sell it to raise the funds Han wants.”

“No he won’t. I can just wish gold out of rocks, or any other material for that matter. You can pay him so much his eyes pop out of his head, and then pay for the surgery to have mechanical ones with a zoom function put in their place. Just the zoom, mind you, don’t want to go overboard.”

He chuckled. “Very well. We’ll just have it put in storage, this is a space port after all. He may want it back in that case. Better pick up some promising rocks on the way to 94.”

“Right.”

He walked away with the shaggy guy, and Han got up. “This way,” he said, heading off. Of course, he didn’t get far as a green skinned guy came up to him. With a gun.

“Going somewhere, Han?” asked the being. The pistol shaped blaster was shoved into Han’s chest.

“Oh, you have got to be kidding me,” Lysanias moaned.

“Clear out,” said the being. “This is between Han and me.”

“You know what? I’ve only been here two minutes and I’m already tired of people waving guns around.” He raised a hand and took a more solid stance, figuring the gun was metal enough. It was, so he crushed it into a ball, making the being yelp and toss it away. “Now, perhaps if you would like to talk instead of just waving around a- Put that away!” He glared at Han, who predictably had his gun out. “What did I just say? Put. It. Away!” That’s when he noticed the gun was actually pointed at him.

"You... How did you do that?"

"Put it down," Jenny demanded, voice like iron. Her gun was out too, and it was something really big and mean looking. "You can't take us both, and if he can do that, imagine what he could do to *you* if he wanted."

"Er, can we get back to me for a second?" asked the green skinned guy.

"No one cares about you, Greedo," Han told him. "Unless you're going to punch me into submission, just go back to Jabba and tell him I'll have the money when I get back."

"I've heard that before."

"This time it's true. I'm doing a very easy passenger run. There and back, take me a couple of days." He slowly lowered his gun. "Where did you even pull that from, lady?"

"I have a purse that's bigger on the inside. All the way down, please, and holstered."

"All right, all right, but he was going to shoot me. You can't blame me for protecting myself."

"Shoot you? In the middle of a bar?" Lysanias couldn't believe what he was hearing.

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Can we just go?"

"How about it, Greedo? Got any backup weapons you want destroyed?"

"Jabba will hear about this!" he promised, and stalked off.

"Don't forget to tell him about the money!" he shouted after him. "If there are no more interruptions, perhaps we could be on our way?"

"Fine with me," Jenny agreed, swinging her gun up to her shoulder. "After you."

"Should have asked for double," Han grumbled, but let them off to docking bay

94.

Lysanias had no eye for spaceships, or really any ships for that matter, so he simply waited for the others, who were soon in coming.

"Good to see you again sir," C3-P0 told him. "Waiting with Luke was very exasperating if you don't mind my saying so. And R2-D2 is still safe?"

"Totally safe." He patted the dispenser.

"I'm relieved to hear it. I'll get aboard and we can be on our way."

"That's right! What do think of this-" He jerked around, feeling that tingly feeling that meant "Get up there, we're about to come under attack!"

"Oh dear!" He waddled up the plank as Lysanias drew his sword. Figures in white came into view, and he readied his shield.

"Luke, get behind me, and get into the ship," he called, stepping forward to hopefully draw their fire.

"You can't tell me what to do!" he shot back, but verbally not with a blaster. He still went, he wasn't a moron.

Lysanias expected a bunch of blaster fire to come his way but one of the troopers was pointing to his back. "Wait, wait, don't shoot," he called to his team. "I think I know that guy."

"You know one of these guys? You get around," Jenny remarked. Her gun dipped a bit.

"Yeah, I'll tell you the whole story in a bit. I've got a bunch of stories to tell, actually. Get up there, I'll go talk to them." He put his sword back.

"Go talk to them?" Han obviously couldn't believe what he was hearing. "Are you crazy?"

"No," he answered simply, and walked off. Jenny walked with him. "Go warm the engines up or something, make yourself useful," she called back. "That's a thing you can do, right?"

"He didn't go into town, did he?" asked the trooper.

"To be fair, his uncle didn't know that," Lysanias replied, holding up a finger.

"Who's the cutie?" asked one of the troopers. "She wasn't there at the farm. I wouldn't have shot her."

"I like her gun," said another.

"Is that what they're calling- oh you mean her actual rifle."

"You didn't see it?"

"Her eyes are up here."

"You couldn't have shot me," she bragged, ignoring their banter.

"Wooooo," said the men. "You found a feisty one!"

"Can we stay on track here, please?" asked the captain. "The droids? I assume they're aboard that ship?"

*Well, one of them is. The other is in my dispenser.* "Yes, that's right."

"And it'll take off if we get any closer?"

"Again, correct."

"So we're dead. Our mission is a complete failure."

"You don't have to go back empty handed," Lysanias told him.

"We don't?" asked another. "You'll come with us?"

"Hahahah, no. Not me."

"The cutie?"

"No! I'm talking about information! I'll tell you where we're going, and what the droids look like. You can verify it with the people at the bar, they all saw them." *Well, one of them. Briefly. But someone must have heard us mention the destination.*

"I suppose it's something."

"Your boss, he's this Darth Vader character?" Jenny asked him.

"That's the one."

She nodded. "I've been here for a bit. He sounds like a nasty character, if you get my drift?" She looked over at Lysanias, who nodded.

"He is, what's your point?"

"I have a message for him. There are two wanderers here now, so he better step up his game if he wants to win."

"Two what now?"

"Two wanderers. Step up his game if he wants to win. Tell him that exactly, he'll know what it means."

"Cute and crazy, apparently."

*Shoot, I can't let her beat me in bravado, can I?* "Not crazy. I have something you can give him, actually. A token of our intent." He pulled out a coin he had made earlier and used his power to reshape it. Now it looked like a golden sun from Pyre. "Here, he'll know what it means." *I hate to simply announce myself like this but I've got Jenny here now, right? We can handle anything! And it might make him spare these men if they know they have us to deal with now.*

"I'm just supposed to hand this to him? How should I say I got it?"

"Tell him the truth. We got the drop on you, left you alive to deliver the message, and there you are," Jenny explained simply. "Believe me, he won't blame you."

"He better not. Fine, I'll tell him. But where are you going?"

"Alderaan. The droid carrying the information is R2-D2, a squat droid about this high-"

"I know what an R2 unit looks like. Fine. Look, are you..." He glanced around. "All right, back to the ship. I'll be along in a moment. Move!"

They seemed hesitant but left as ordered. The man took off his helmet and fiddled with the inside. "There, my camera is off." He looked around nervously. "Look, I saw the way you moved. And blocked those blaster bolts. And that sword of yours... Are you planning to kill Darth Vader?"

"If he's who we think he is, you can bet on it!" Jenny told him.

The man looked her up and down. "You can move like he can? You some kind of team or something?"

Jenny smiled. "Shoot me."

"What?"

"Go ahead." She spread her arms wide. "I dare you. You can't hurt me, shoot me!"

He leveled his rifle, a different one as his was busted obviously, looking confused, and she nodded to egg him on. "Okay, it's your life." He pulled the trigger. The bolt impacted some kind of energy barrier around her and dissipated, the shimmer going away in a second. *Something like my barrier wards? It wasn't as defined, mine is more a ghostly armor but hers was just an energy field. I suppose there's always a dozen ways to do a similar thing.* "I see. Wouldn't mind that, but how did you manage to shrink down a deflector to a size you could carry and power? I don't see a huge backpack full of batteries on your back."

"Come with us, and I'll tell you."

"What? Defect? I don't know..." He looked thoughtful. "It's tempting, it really is. I could totally just walk into that ship with you. But I have my squad to think about. If Darth Vader really does need a pound of flesh for our failure, it's on my head to provide it. I was in charge, the blame is mine. I won't have him take it out on them."

"Wow." She seemed impressed. "That's not something you see every day. Real loyalty like that is pretty rare. In any world."

"Yeah, tell me about it. Especially for us."

"Look, I'm Jenny." She stuck her hand out. "I hope we can meet again sometime. I think you would be an interesting person to get to know."

"TJ-617," he replied, taking it. "I hope so too. It'll mean I'm still alive."

"I wish you luck, and that we could do more for you," Lysanias told him, also shaking his hand. "I'm Lysanias. Sorry you got shot, but maybe some good came of it."

"Thank you for stopping my men and treating me. Even if it was only a few more hours, I was glad to live them. Take care, okay? And *kill that Nerf Bonking Darth Vader for me!*"

Jenny laughed. "You got it!"

He turned his camera back on, put his helmet back on, and walked away.

"It just goes to show," she remarked, "you never can tell with people."

"You never can tell," he agreed. "Let's go."

The pair walked into the ship and moments later blasted off into space on the next leg of their journey.

And training. And Lysanias telling them what they were up against. So look forward to that!

Chapter 4  
You Must Learn the Ways of the Force  
When: Moments later  
Where: Millennium Falcon Bridge

Having taken off and cleared the atmosphere of the planet the Falcon spotted the Imperial Cruiser up ahead. Lysanias was gazing out the windows in wonder at how clear the stars were now, but was brought back to reality as the thing started firing on them.

"Try to hold them off, angle the deflector shield while I make the calculations for the jump to lightspeed," Han commanded.

"Wait, calculations?" Lysanias asked. "Quick, where's R2-D2 when you need him?" He opened the top of his dispenser and pulled out the sheaf of wards. *I put him in last, right? So he should be the first one at the back of the stack.* "Release!"

"Oh, hello!" R2 chirped. "I guess I'm back."

"No time for a happy reunion. Can you assist in making the calculations for the... what did you call it?"

"The jump to lightspeed," Jenny filled in.

"What she said."

"Can I? Show me to a data port!"

"He needs a data port."

"There's one there!" the hairy guy told him, pointing.

"Thanks, don't think we've been formally introduced. R2, can you reach that one there?"

"Huh, maybe. This wasn't build with droids in mind, which is odd, humans don't have data ports normally." But he plugged in and did whatever he did to begin adding his processing power to the ship's.

"Why is there so much turbulence?" Luke whined, coming up behind everyone. "I thought we had cleared the atmosphere? Shouldn't space be airless, and thus, no more shaking?"

"Oh, you know loads about space travel do you, kid?" Han asked. "Been there and back, got the T-shirt?"

"I know basic physics."

"Learning to swim and reading about swimming, kid. Now all of you get out of here, you're cramping my style!"

"There's nothing more we can do here," Jenny agreed. "Let's head to the back and see where we've landed ourselves. I call bottom bunk!"

"Making a lot of assumptions there, lady," the hairy guy told her. Jenny looked politely like the being was speaking an alien language or something. Lysanias sighed.

"He or she said... er..."

"I'm a he, but thanks for not assuming."

"Of course, he said you're making a lot of assumptions. Wait, can you understand him, and I'm being redundant?"

"Nah. Just humans like him," she pointed at Han. "Strange fact, but true."

"Huh. Guess it's time to bust out the communication wards again. That's fine. So this is a space ship, huh? I can't wait to see more of it."

Two minutes later.

"I take it back!"

Jenny laughed. "It's to be expected. This is probably his house, so it's to be expected that it would be a bit messy."

"A bit messy?" Luke complained. "This is way past messy. Look at the state of this place!"

"I would have to agree," Lysanias told them. "Has this place ever been cleaned?"

"Hey, the shaking stopped," Obi-Wan noticed, looking up. "We must have made the jump. We're in the clear now."

"Great, how long until we get where we're going?"

"You'll have to ask our pilot. All things being relative, we'll get there when we arrive." He chuckled. "We'll have at least a few days to begin your training, Luke. And you two as well, if you want it."

"I'm all for it," Lysanias agreed.

"I'll give it a try, but apart from my *shifting* and the supernatural stuff I've picked up, usually I can't learn much more. I rely more on technology from the various worlds I've visited than innate abilities. And being a good shot." She made finger guns.

"I see."

"But first, someone has promised me a story about where they came from. And if it's not too much trouble, the story of why you trusted Jenny here so readily and why she's coming with us."

"Of course. The question is, do I tell Han and his friend what I'm about to tell you? Jenny, Luke, and yourself bring the party size up to four, and that's the max. So they probably won't have much to do with it."

"The what?" asked Luke.

He waved it off. "Never mind, little quirk of the last world I was in."

"Actually, I am interested in why three imperial ships were waiting for us," Han announced, coming into the living area. "So if it's story time, get talking. I've got enough trouble in my life without adding more."

"Ah, there you are, R2," said C3-P0 as his friend rolled into the room behind them. "It really wasn't fair, you being carried around like that."

"Next time you can carry the message and be the target of an entire galactic civilization," R2 chirped at him. "Hey Lysanias, thanks for getting me out. Shaved at least a little time off the calculations, that was quick thinking."

"You did say it was what you were made for."

"Absolutely right."

"You speak droid?" asked Han. "Or are you just making all that up?"

"Oh boy. Let me get out the wards or this will take all night. Day. Whatever it is in space."

So he affixed a ward to the non-human speaking members of the crew and everyone introduced themselves. The hairy guy was apparently named "Chewbacca" which was weird because Lysanias heard his speech as mostly yelps and gunts. *How does he even pronounce his own name?* Han's name was Han Solo, which wasn't a made up, fake name at all, no sir, and the others introduced themselves while Jenny handed out more business cards. Nobody got it any more than Lysanias, which she said was typical.

*After all, would I tell my real name to a bunch of obviously wanted fugitives? Of course not, because when they are inevitably captured and start giving up the names of who helped them, it's better my name doesn't come up during that "conversation."*

"Now, your story, if you please?" asked Obi-Wan.

"Of course!" He told the story to this group, how he came from outside their reality to fight the shadow avatar, and basically save all their lives. Jenny agreed with him, not that it made any difference because if two strangers came up to you and said the world was ending tomorrow, you might want a more trusted source to provide corroboration.

They couldn't deny his abilities, of course, or the fancy weaponry Jenny pulled out of nowhere. In the end, Lysanias told them it didn't matter much if they believed him or not.

"Just go about things in the way you normally would have done them. The avatar will show up sooner or later."

"That's been my experience," Jenny agreed. "Of course, I can sense things that

are out of place in a reality, so it's a little easier for me."

"Which brings us to what you all can teach me. If I could get a quick demonstration of what 'the force' can do, followed by what you can do, Jenny, that would be great."

"There's a problem with that, though," cautioned Obi-Wan. "While there are a few physical things I can show you, much of the force is feeling out your surroundings, or meditating on the meaning of seemingly random events that are in fact linked."

"Yeah, I can show you how I use my sub-space pocket, but how do I demonstrate feeling out an object or person that doesn't belong in this reality? Some things you'll just have to learn the old fashioned way."

"Which is fine, I pick things up fairly quickly. How long do we have?"

"Ah, finally something I can answer," Han told them. He punched up a map on a nearby monitor. "We're here, our destination is here. Given my .5 hyperdrive engine it should only take about two days."

"Point five?" Luke scoffed in disbelief. "That's impossible!"

"Oh, space travel and hyperdrive expert. Glad to have you along, Luke. Maybe while you're here you can prove yourself a culinary expert and my chair has this squeak if you lean back in it..."

"I'm serious, he's gotta be lying." He turned to the others. "You're not buying this, are you?"

"What would be the point of deception at this time?" Obi-Wan asked. "We're already aboard and under way. We will either reach Alderaan in the two days, or we will not. That alone will prove his honesty, and arriving in three days will show a clear falsehood. Why bother?"

He sputtered something but dropped it.

"I don't understand the numbering scheme, but I think I understand the ship a little better," Jenny told them. "You don't put a super advanced engine in something shiny that someone would want to steal. You put it in a beat up old ship no one looks twice at."

"Something like that, sister."

"If we're brother and sister now, *bro*, go make your poor old sister a sandwich."

"What?" He held a hand to his ear. "You paid for *passage* to Alderaan. Meals are extra."

"Oh, I see how it is."

"Never mind, I can provide food," Lysanias told them. "But first, *training!*"

"And this hurts you?" Obi-Wan asked, setting an odd looking sphere in the air where it hung unsupported.

*Where did he pull that from?* "Quite a bit, actually. I will also be blinded for at least several hours, depending on how long this takes. Please don't hesitate. Show me what you can show me, one thing after another, and let me absorb it. It doesn't have to be too flashy, just enough for me to grab your skill."

"I see."

"You really believe him?" asked Han, sitting over near the wall. "His 'special eyes' are going to let him cram months or years of lessons into a single instant?"

"You saw what he could do," Chewbacca told him. "How do you explain the fire, or turning that piece of metal into a golden statue? You know the force exists, Han, don't play dumb. The Jedi order wasn't destroyed that long ago."

"Those guys just used tricks and intimidation," he countered. "There was no real power but political power and fancy glowing swords. Give me a blaster any day."

"So now he's the one saying you're lying. Quite the reversal," Luke suggested.

"Ah, you stay out of it."

"Are you ready?" Jenny asked.

"Ready!" Lysanias put power into his eyes, wincing at the now familiar pain, and

the demonstration began. Obi-Wan first lifted an object without touching it, making the inner Lysanias squeal a bit in anticipation of finally being able to move things not metal, rock, water, or fire. He then ignited his lightsaber which activated the training sphere, and he deftly blocked several shots using a modified technique Lysanias was already familiar with. Wasting no time for further thoughts on that Jenny stepped up and put something into, then took something out of her sub-space pocket.

The demonstration ended, his eyes closed.

"Excellent, thank you!"

"What, that's it?" Han snorted.

"I'm with Han on this one," agreed Luke. "That was completely underwhelming. I mean, I can see how moving something at a distance could be useful in very specific circumstances but that was it. You just blocked some shots by the training sphere, that doesn't have to do with the force at all. Just being good with a light saber."

"Er, serious question?" asked Jenny. "What exactly is that 'light saber' as you called it, how do I get one, and how are we not all on fire? In that order, please."

"The light saber is the weapon of the Jedi," explained Obi-Wan. "It's a magnetically contained plasma, able to cut through most anything and, as you saw, deflect blaster fire. To get one you would have to make it yourself and I doubt we have any of the needed components, and why would we be on fire?"

"My rebuttal: Awesome, want one. We have a guy who can turn rocks into gold, I'm sure he could make any parts we needed. And because science."

"Come again?"

"That thing should put out enough heat to vaporize us all, I don't care how strong the magnetic fields are. Though I suppose there could be some physical law here that prevents that from happening."

"Wait a second," Lysanias interrupted. "Say I build one of those and take it with me. On the next world I visit I could switch it on and vaporize a room?"

"It's a possibility."

"Yipes! How large a possibility?"

"Can we get back to the force for a minute?" Luke insisted. "I was looking forward to a lot of amazing powers. Han's right, practicing to be accurate with a blaster would be more worth my time."

"Thank you!" Han agreed. "Someone is finally talking sense around here."

"Not learn about the force?" Obi-Wan sounded shocked. "But it's your... hmm... yes well. Luke, you have to understand a few things."

"I'm listening."

"First, this was all I could think of that I could physically demonstrate. I've been in hiding for... how old are you?"

"I'm eighteen."

"I've been in hiding for eighteen years."

*That doesn't seem suspicious, not at all.*

"In that time I haven't done much of the physical stuff, and I'm getting older. The truth is, you can do a lot with the force, like create barriers or change your physiology. I've been more focused on the non-physical stuff, looking within, seeing the future. I can't demonstrate those. A barrier is simply invisible force around you, and changing yourself, well, I would just stand there from your perspective."

*And some of that I already know how to do, thanks Amy!*

"All I can give you is a primer on the force. Teach you how to feel it, to hear what it has to tell you. You're going to have to rediscover how to do all it will allow you to do. And of course some people find certain things to be easier, so you'll have to find your specialty."

"And to be clear, he wasn't just blocking those bolts," Lysanias told him. Or at least he hoped he was looking in the right direction. *My other senses must have been enhanced by that as well, they seem to have vanished for the moment. That means*

*they were part of what he showed me and once back will be better than ever.* “He was putting his light saber in position before they were fired. When I rescued your aunt and uncle I bounced a few bolts off my shield. Different thing, it’s larger for one and the sword increases my reflexes so I could react in time to actually block them. I couldn’t do it with as thin a blade as that unless it was already in position by the time they pulled the trigger. Back home a woman named Amy could do something similar. She wasn’t a combatant but she could glimpse the future and tell us to avoid something, or how better to strike. This seems similar just directed at yourself.”

“Seems like she would have been a target then,” Han guessed. “If I was fighting you and some lady was shouting what I was about to do before I did it, I’d shoot her first.”

“She would see it coming though. As for being a target, not so much. We fought stuff like animals that didn’t understand speech and I only saw a couple of guns in the months I was awake and moving around. Most common projectile weapon on my home world is bows. And they take a lot of practice so most people stick with close weapons.”

“I see.”

“Back to the force,” Obi-Wan picked the conversation back up. “With practice you can see further and further into the future. Even get glimpses of other places, events happening far away.”

“Great. Instead of just seeing things around me I can’t do anything about, I can worry about stuff light years away that I can’t do anything about. Sign me up!”

Chewbacca laughed. “He’s got a point there.”

“Look, it’s up to you, of course. But know that Darth Vader is a master of the force. If you want to defeat him you’ll have to have at least a passing familiarity with it.”

“Are you kidding? I’m not going anywhere near that guy!” Luke protested.

“What? Why?”

“Uh, because he’s more than likely surrounded by thousands of storm troopers? Inside a base, or a starship, or a bunker? Plus he’s had years to practice fighting with a light saber, I’ll have a few weeks at most. He’d chop me in half with one swing! And if you’re right about this force business he’ll know I would be coming and just station *more* people there. How many shots can you block at once?”

“Given you’re using a line segment, four at most, holding two sabers,” Jenny told him. “Maybe six if you were really lucky and they were all in a line?”

“Exactly! You go up against more than ten people and there’s no force power in the universe that can save you. Well, I guess if you really can make barriers... but you can’t just sit behind a barrier forever.”

“And your energy isn’t limitless,” Lysanias agreed. “At least mine isn’t. It could be battered down if under that kind of fire.”

“Right, see, he knows! They just wait you out. Does air go through a barrier? They either just pump poison gas into a room or just wait for you to asphyxiate.”

“What about sound? Could they knock you out with a sound pulse?” Jenny asked. “What about just cutting the floor out from under you? I suppose if it was metal they could just electrify it.”

“This is getting rather far afield of our original exercise,” Obi-Wan protested. “The force made the Jedi a respected peacekeeping organization for thousands of years. It was respected and so were those that used it.”

“Until they were all slaughtered,” Han reminded them. “Strange that not a one of them saw it coming.”

“There was interference from the dark side,” he harrumphed.

“That’s convenient.”

*Wait, there’s a dark side?*

“Look, it happened. I was there. The force can aid you in many ways, from the subtle to the not so subtle, if you let it. I’m offering to teach you, will you really turn me down?”

“What do you think, Lysanias?” Luke asked. “I mean that blade is awfully short range in a galaxy full of people that use blasters.”

“I wouldn’t turn away knowledge,” said honestly. “And just being able to move things without touching them, I mean, ask Han how I saved his life by crushing that green guy’s gun. I bet you could do that with the force. I’ve realized I’m about to be attacked many times, and been able to warn everyone around me. If you can do the same, you’ll never be ambushed. Isn’t that alone worth a few days of listening to what he has to say?”

“Besides,” Jenny added. “We’re stuck in here for two days, you have anything better to do?”

“I suppose not. All right, where do we begin?”

“Great, my pupil decides to learn about the force because he’s bored and doesn’t have anything better to do. First, let’s go over exactly what the force is...”

-----  
In this chapter, Lysanias uses the potential he got from the last world (“XP”) to learn Subspace Pocket and Glimpsing to a 5, Telekinesis to a 6. He improved ESP to a 5, and Premonition to a 5 as well. Naturally Obi-Wan has higher ratings than these, but that’s all he could afford.

## Chapter 5

That's no Moon

When: Several hours later

Where: Falcon's living quarters

Several hours later Lysanias could see again, and had completed putting his ward collection, the shield, the bag of marbles, his armor, and the trunk into sub-space. Jenny had offered some instruction on feeling out things that didn't belong in a reality, and in how to use the "adaptive" skill that reality travelers picked up. She took him to the cockpit and had him identify certain buttons, levers, and switches, a feat even Lysanias was surprised he could do at an even beginner level.

"We seem to pick up the ability to use whatever's unique to that reality," she explained. "If you've been interacting with things in your previous two that were unique to that reality, you've already started picking it up."

"I was shown how to use magitek armor, that would count. It probably only exists there," he agreed.

"Sure, whatever that is. Don't shy away from learning stuff like that, just because you think it won't exist elsewhere. It'll just get rolled up into your ability to adapt to the reality you're in."

"So you could fly the Falcon?" Han asked her, watching all this from the seat behind the pilot's seat.

"Sure, doesn't seem too complicated."

"And it's because you've done other unique but unrelated things in these other realities of yours?"

"That's right."

"Almost sorry I asked. Don't break anything up here." He left.

Lastly he bugged Obi-Wan for how he had done the "Jedi mind trick" as he called it, and got some instruction in that. He found that with the sword at hand he could command Han to do something two out of three times, but without it not at all.

"I suppose that figures," Obi-Wan accepted. "If that blade of yours really is strengthening your will, you are willing someone to do something they normally wouldn't."

"Guess I'll have to practice it, not that I'm sure how I'll do that." Lysanias looked thoughtful as he belted the sword back on.

"Why don't you just file that?" Jenny asked him. "You filed everything else away."

"Inari said to spend time with it. No idea why, maybe just as a joke to make me carry this huge blade around? But it is alive in a certain sense, so it should 'get to know' me."

"Getting to know you!" she singsonged. "Hey, that reminds me! Do you have a song yet?"

"A what?"

"A song, silly. I found Susan one, but I haven't known you very long. Humm, songs with big swords in them... wait, no those might not be what we're looking for." She pulled out a music device and started scrolling through it.

"I haven't really heard much music, at home or in my travels. Korra sometimes had a radio going I guess, and maybe the inns in my last reality had performers, but that's about it."

"Man, that's one of the best parts of *shifting*," Jenny told him, looking up. "Hearing all kinds of crazy music from other worlds." She put her head back down. "I need something that would suit a lone wanderer, as you don't have a group you travel with. Man, I'm not even past the A's yet, I haven't cleaned this thing off in ages."

"Do I *need* a song?"

"Well, no," she admitted. "But really, what do you need when it comes down to it?"

This is just a diversion, I don't need lessons in the force. Neither do you. So come help me find a song that fits you."

"I guess."

"I actually have a music collection that numbers in the tens of thousands," chirped R2-D2. "If you can connect that portable device to me I'll download them for you."

"You collect music too?" she asked him.

"Sure. I'm just sitting around usually, when I'm not being shot at. I listen to it in real time, gives me something to do."

"Have to see if I can come up with an adapter of some kind. I hope you can work out the file system on this thing."

"I'm sure I can come up with something."

So they sat for several hours listening to pieces of songs, and Lysanias didn't feel any of them fit until they got to near the end of the collection. He listened to a very talented young woman sing, and the lyrics fit him like he thought nothing ever would.

*Lost in darkest blue  
Endless labyrinths weaving through  
Will you stagger on, with no star to light your way?  
Share with me your tears  
All your troubles and deepest fears  
I remember when you chased all my shadows away*

*Won't you take my hand?  
Come away with me from this land  
Let me give to you all that you have given to me  
Fly horizon bound  
Find the moon behind darkening clouds  
Even far apart, know our souls together will be  
When the storm draws nigh  
Dreams will shatter before your eyes  
Know that you're not alone  
When the battle starts I will comfort your restless heart  
You'll know that you are home*

*When your stars stop shining  
Endless vines around you winding  
Know that you're not alone  
I will give my all  
So your tears will no longer fall  
Down, down on sorrow's stone*

*Look into my eyes  
All eternity you will find  
In this fragile heart, know that you will always belong  
Shout into the night  
Show the darkness that you will fight  
Hopeless you may feel, but inside I know you are strong*

*Keep me in your heart  
So we'll never be far apart  
Let the bonds of love break these chains imprisoning you  
Always you will find  
Shadows lingering close behind  
Lift your spirits now,  
We shall be together soon*

"Figures it would be something like that," Jenny remarked, shaking her head.

"What do you mean?"

"The lyrics for that music were written by a woman that goes by Erutan. Or Katethegreat19, originally. They came later, the original music had no lyrics. Man, haven't thought about her in a while. There was something, oh right, she almost couldn't sing anymore, something happened to her vocal cords. I'll have to go back sometime, see how she's doing. If her story hasn't ended by now, you know time runs differently between realities, right?"

"Yeah, even I know that much. You talk like you've met her."

"A musician? Of course! I always go right to the source if I can. And she was high on my list after I heard her work."

"How long have you been bumping around realities, anyway?"

She blinked at him in shock at the question. "I really have no idea," she replied softly. "Sometimes it seems like forever."

"You don't look that old, it can't be that long miss," C3-P0 told her.

"I guess that stands to reason..." But she looked troubled, looking down at the floor of the ship. "Perhaps for as long as there are stories to tell..." She turned away, leaving the room and taking her rolling mix of emotions with her.

*Now what did she mean by that? And she said 'if her story hasn't ended' not 'if she's still alive.' What an odd phrase.*

But she would speak no more on the subject, and the next day Obi-Wan was having Luke practice his deflection for about a minute until Lysanias called "wait a minute."

"What?" he asked.

"This Dark fellow isn't going to be using a blaster, is he?"

"Darth," Obi-Wan corrected. "And certainly not."

*Humm, wonder if that could be some sort of exploitable weakness? He'll be so dependent on the force maybe a dozen people shooting at him is the way to go. I bet fire bending, or somehow shooting some kind of fire at him he wouldn't be able to do anything about. He'll be used to bouncing blaster bolts off his light saber, not a liquid that's on fire. Have to watch for that barrier Obi-Wan was talking about. Still, even slightly unconventional thinking might take down a Jedi. The shadow avatar would be a different story, but if he is just a scary guy here, and we do end up face to face, it's something to keep in mind. "And you're convinced Luke will have to face him?"*

"I've gotten that sense from the future, yes. Why do you ask?"

*Is that before or after Jenny and I showed up? "So aren't you giving him exactly the wrong kind of training? He doesn't need to practice avoiding blaster fire, he needs to practice fighting another light saber user. Or more realistically, start thinking of things a Jedi wouldn't be able to easily defend against but that don't require years of training to master."*

"Like just shooting the guy with bullets," Jenny suggested.

"Like what?" Luke asked. "Bull ates?"

"Oh, come on. Bullets! You must have had projectile weapons before these blasters were developed. I don't care how hot, or not, these light saber things are. A very fast projectile might melt passing through one, but not vaporize. Again, because science. I wouldn't want to be hit by melted lead moving that fast, would you?"

"I wouldn't," Lysanias agreed.

"So that's what you need. A shop that'll sell you some 'antique' guns and all the ammo you can carry."

"I'll keep a lookout for one," Obi-Wan replied dryly. "Until one comes along we have this exercise, which is more about feeling the force, getting used to it telling him where the blade should be to block incoming attacks. Not about blocking attacks on its own, useful as that is."

"Incoming *blaster* attacks, is the point I was trying to make," Lysanias told them. "Blocking a sword blow is going to be very different. I just don't want him practicing

something he's not going to use if there's something more worthwhile he could be practicing instead. Fighting a person at arm's length is going to be very different, and need different skills, than fighting someone shooting at you from a distance."

"Too bad these blades are lethal," Luke agreed, "or we could go a few rounds."

"They don't have to be!" Obi-Wan told them. "Here, I'll show you." He worked the controls on Luke's device and the beam glowed less brightly. "See, it won't cut now. Go ahead, take mine and see what you can do." He made the same adjustment and handed it over.

"I have to fight *him*?" Luke complained. "Why not you?"

"It was his idea. Let him jump around, I'm an old man!"

"Thanks a lot. As if it wasn't humiliating enough trying to block the blaster shots, now I get to look stupid fighting a person who actually knows how to use a sword."

"Better than looking like a corpse if you actually meet a master of this thing." He ignited it (expecting to be set on fire) and gave it a bit of a wave (away from everyone). "It almost seems to have weight, how can that be?"

"There's an inertial dampener inside," Obi-Wan explained. "It's adjustable too, if you feel you want more or less resistance to your motion."

"A what?"

"A system that cancels motion," Jenny explained. "The thing that must surround this ship so we won't be turned into paste when we come out of hyperspace. Or when a tight maneuver is done. Or if we came to a sudden stop via crashing."

"I heard that!" Han called over. "I've never crashed in my life!"

"Right, it's just a smaller version. It wants to cancel the motion you're doing, so the blade seems to pull against you like a normal blade would. Fighting with it off is very odd, you're basically just swinging the hilt around. Easy to go a little too far in that case, chop up a wall."

*Or the person next to you?* "I see." He looked the thing over, and it was very clearly a tube of energy, not a blade. He twisted it this way and that. "Don't have to worry about edge alignment either, there is no edge. This is going to take some adjustment." *On the one hand, my blade carries its own weight because of the bonus to strength I get from it. It's still heavy though, and slower to swing around than this would be. Still, I shouldn't let my sword skills degrade by relying on the always hit property of my sword. Which I still haven't tested around here, by the way. There may be times I might have to take up another sword for some reason. Of course at that point I'd just use bending, or now the force I guess.*

"And you're sure this is non-lethal?" Luke asked, eyeing the blade as he brought it up.

"I can reattach any limbs you lose," Lysanias assured him.

"Really?"

"Well... maybe? I've never tried it, so..."

"Great!"

Lysanias took it slow while Obi-Wan and Jenny both gave Luke suggestions and Jenny kept a count of how many times Luke would have died in a real fight.

"Can you stop that!?" he asked after she shouted another number.

"Nope!" she said happily. "This is way too much fun."

It was an hour or two later that both felt it. Lysanias staggered, feeling a dark *something* flinging itself joyfully through his mind. Obi-Wan felt it too, and held his head.

"What? What is it?" Luke asked, lowering his saber.

"Somehow the shadow avatar just scored a victory," Lysanias told him. "I felt it, like a cry of jubilation over plans fulfilled."

"That wasn't what I felt at all," Obi-Wan countered. "It was more like the tortured screams of billions of souls flung into the endless void all in an instant."

"Uh, if part of the force is learning to feel things like that, I'd rather pass," Luke

told them. "What does it mean?"

"I agree something terrible has happened, shadow avatar or not," Obi-Wan told them. "And for us to feel it here? In the hyperspace corridor? It must have been a unifying event unparalleled in history. I must meditate on the meaning before I can answer that question." He hesitantly got up and staggered into hallway to head to another part of the ship.

"You want to continue?" Luke asked him.

"I don't know. I could ask what it was, but I think we'll find out sooner, rather than later. And trying to phrase a question about what it was that can be answered in one word could be tricky."

"I'll take over for now," Jenny volunteered. "I've used a sword before, I can at least keep your momentum going."

"Thanks," Lysanias told her, handing the deactivated light saber over. He sat down, looking troubled. *What could that have been?*

Obi-Wan didn't get any time to meditate because it wasn't a moment later that Han announced they were coming out of hyperspace and arriving at Alderaan. They crowded into the cockpit to watch the approach, and the tunnel of light they were passing through fell away to normal stars. That's when the group discovered what Obi-Wan and Lysanias had been feeling, as they came upon the shattered remains of a world instead of that world itself.

"It has begun here," Lysanias sadly told them. "If the shadow avatar has the means to destroy entire planets it won't stop until every last one of them is gone."

"Whatever did this must be in the area," Jenny told them. "You just felt it be destroyed."

"Nothing can destroy a planet," Han told them. "Not every ship in the empire's fleet combined. We must have just come out in the wrong place."

*Not even after a day or two of non-stop attack? I saw how big those ships were when we left that desert planet. They could just tow a really big rock between them on a line and let it go, smashing a planet to bits. To say nothing can destroy one shows a lack of imagination.*

"Nothing in this reality, maybe. But there are *people* that can destroy planets. If one of them came here—"

A sudden beeping cut her off and the scout ship buzzed them.

"That's an imperial ship," Chewbacca told them. "They must be involved somehow."

"Do you think the planet had any ships in orbit?" Jenny asked. "Scan the area and see if there's any ships out there. Alderaanian ships I mean, that might be friendly to us, not imperial ones."

"There's a lot of interference," Han told them. "Magnetic fields are all over the place, and there's some kind of background radiation I've never seen before."

"Blowing up a planet will probably do that," Obi-Wan told them sadly. "This system will likely never be the same."

"We'll have to jump out of here," Han decided. "If we head out a few light minutes we can catch up to the light that's leaving this place and see what happened. See, I know 'basic physics' too! Luke."

"A jump like that won't take long to calculate, I'll get it started," Chewbacca told them, pressing buttons on the console.

"Not before we take out that pilot," Han told him. "They saw us, we can't have them reporting we were here."

"The empire knows we're coming here," Lysanias protested.

"What? How?"

"I told them. That soldier back on Luke's planet, anyway."

Han turned to look at him. "And we arrive to find the whole place blown up? You

don't think, I don't know, this is your fault?"

"What? But that's... no... can't be..."

"Don't let him get to you, Lysanias," Jenny told him. "We got here in two days. There's no way those soldiers made it back to their base, told their story, and got a planet destroying force here in that time. I think."

"It's strange though," Chewbacca noted. "Shouldn't any moons have gone spinning off into space without the gravity tether to the planet keeping them here? That moon looks like it's just sitting there."

"Er, that's what the marble I used to come here looked like," Lysanias told them, totally ruining what Obi-Wan was going to say. It probably wasn't that important anyway.

"Then that's what blew up the planet," Jenny reasoned. "We probably shouldn't stick around."

But of course the ship was caught in a tractor beam, and started to get pulled in. Lysanias quickly put the droids in wards and then stuck them in sub-space, then put "ignore me" wards on as the others climbed into compartments built into the floor.

*Pulling things out of thin air certainly is neat!*

"Oh, one thing about doing that," Jenny said, totally not reading his mind or anything. "The shadow avatar as you call it can see into your personal space. Even take things out of it. So don't rely on it to hide anything from them."

"Good to know."

A tense few moments passed as the ship was brought into the bay, Lysanias wasted no time putting his armor back on and grabbing his shield after making sure his Relics were in place. *No magic here, so it's shoes and Hyper Wrist, thanks Terra. Won't bother with the wall ring or hairpin. Actually...* He handed Jenny the hairpin, who thanked him and stuck it in her hair. Jenny had two guns out, but otherwise seemed at ease. *Must be all the scrapes she's been in, this one is just another day for her.* He was able to watch as the ship silently slid into the station, and his mind balked at just how huge this thing was. Oh sure, he knew planets were big but that wasn't something people had sat down in a room and decided "you know what would be fun to build? A huge sphere in space the size of a moon. Get right on that."

*Is there enough metal in just one planet to have built this whole thing? How long did it take? Apparently the Jedi were destroyed eighteen years ago according to Obi-Wan, had they started construction before then? Must have, but the sheer scope of such a project! How could any one mind or even group engineer such a thing? Where did they get the air to put in it? Water to drink?*

"Here they come," Jenny told him, as the ramp into the ship lowered. Soldiers swarmed the place, running past Lysanias and Jenny who just stood there. "We didn't even need the wards, how do they even see out of those helmets?"

"I'm more worried about what we do now. How are we going to get out of here? I might be able to fit something the size of the Falcon into a ward at this point, but then what? There's nothing around here I can teleport to. We're halfway across the galaxy."

"Remember, this would have happened if we were here or not. I'm sure they'll have a plan."

"I hope so. Of course, if this V'ger character is here, maybe we can just take him out, save this reality, and be on our way."

"It's *Vader*. Why do you seem to have such trouble with his name?"

"Not sure. Never have before. Think we should have a look around?"

"Let's just stay put for the moment."

"Actually, I can do both." *Spirit of the mountain, there are no mountains here but I hope you can still hear me.*

There was no answer.

*Great, maybe it really can't hear me! Mountain spirit, I call to you, appear before me!*

*I hear you.*

The spirit shimmered into existence and looked around.

"Thank goodness. My spirit can check the place out, no one should be able to see it."

"I can. A force user might be able to as well. It's a supernatural power, after all. In fact that might be a good test if someone can use the force, see if they can see the spirit."

*Have to keep that in mind, it's a good idea.* "Good thing there's only like three of them left, huh? And two of them are already here."

"I guess."

The spirit looked around the bay, and there were white suited people running all over the place. Right next to the ship was what seemed to be the vacuum of space, and he idly wondered what kept the air in. *Must be some kind of transparent barrier like Jenny has. Just a really big one.* A figure in a black cloak was striding away, and there was a huge hole in the floor right next to the ship. *How do they not fall in? There's not even a railing or anything. Can they really see well enough to avoid it?* A man at the bottom of the ramp was yelling orders about getting someone to check the ship, so he figured he had a few minutes to wander around. The bay was huge, with a single type of ship in rows across from the area the Falcon was sitting in. Round middle part, with two thin, flat "wings" Lysanias wondered what the purpose was. *They aren't like my wings, they have to be pointed at the ground to provide lift. These things point left and right. Weird.* Men in white armor swarmed the place, many standing at attention, others rushing about from one place to another.

*No really, how are we going to get out of this?*

Chapter 6  
All This Sneaking Around  
When: No time has passed  
Where: The Death Star

Coming back to his own senses and leaving his mountain spirit to poke around as it willed Lysanias and Jenny rapped on the floor, letting the others know the coast was clear. Nothing happened. He remembered the ward and took it off, watching it burn up and then knocked again. Jenny did the same. *Have to key some to these guys when I get a chance.* They lifted the panels off and poked their heads out.

"They're going to bring in a scanning team," Lysanias told them. "I take it that's bad?"

"That's bad," agreed Han. "These compartments won't hold up to careful scrutiny. We need to do something."

"Can we stay ahead of it?" asked Jenny. "Is it some kind of beam they'll sweep over the place? We can watch them through the spirit, see where they've heading with it."

"What spirit? What are you talking about?"

"I'll show you later. Answer the question."

"No, I don't think so. They can scan the whole ship at once."

"So we need a place to hunker down that's nearby, gives us some breathing room to come up with a plan?"

"And we need it fast."

"My spirit is as fast as I am, now. It shouldn't take long." He closed his eyes, reattaching himself, as it were, to the senses of the mountain spirit. It raced around the nearby area, looking for a good spot. *Good thing we worked on letting it get further away from me back on Terra's world. It's already coming in handy. Oh, there's a good spot.*

"I've found something. Some kind of control room, only two people in it. I'll take them out and we can teleport up there."

"You'll do what?" Han asked, obviously not believing his ears. "How are you going to do that and stand here?"

"Just give me a second."

The spirit quickly dropped them both with chi-blocking, and Lysanias nodded. "Great, that's got it."

"What's got what?" Han demanded. "What are you talking about?"

"Just get up here, put those covers back, and grab hold." He took the hilt of the sword in hand, not knowing if just wearing it was enough or if he had to actually hold it to get the bonus to his 'stats.' *Have to figure that out sometime.*

"I'm with Han, I'm not going anywhere until you tell us what's going on," Luke protested.

"Fine, stay here," Jenny said. "But I'm going with the guy that has more powers than any one person I've ever seen. You want to stay here and be caught, that's fine with me." She put a hand on Lysanias' shoulder.

"I did not sign up for this," Han complained, levering himself out of the compartment.

"Better here than tortured by Jaba," Chewbacca told him.

"Aw, shut up!"

With everyone out and the floor again looking like it did everyone grabbed hold and Lysanias *shifted*. Not that kind of *shifted*, he teleported. Not what Jenny can do. They found themselves in the booth across the way from the ship, and the two men manning it were there paralyzed on the floor.

"What did it do to them?" Jenny asked, poking one in the face.

"Chi-block. Disrupts energy flow. You know any martial arts? I could show you."

Only works on people though.”

She snorted. “Do I know any martial arts. I’ve forgotten more about martial arts than you know!”

“Don’t be so sure- hey!”

Han had gotten his pistol out and shot the one guy in the head. He then drew a bead on the other.

“NO!” Lysanias shouted, power surging out of him. Han flew across the room, and would have basically been torn in half had Obi-Wan not acted to cushion the blow. He pulled Han in the other direction, halving the damage and making it non-lethal. He still smashed into the wall and crumpled to the ground, gun flying out of his hand.

Lysanias didn’t waste another thought on the man, rushing to the side of the guy that was shot and tearing his helmet off. He had a pretty good sized hole in the head but Lysanias felt a faint life energy within, so he concentrated on healing him. The hole closed up, and his breathing became steady.

“Will he live?” Obi-Wan asked.

“Yes, no thanks to him.”

“You threw Han pretty hard. You may have my skill in the force but you don’t have my control.”

“Control?” he spat back. “Let me tell you about control.” He marched over and hauled Han up, making Chewbacca raise his bowcaster. “I see you, Chewbacca. If you don’t want the same I suggest you put that down. Or you’ll be wearing it as a necklace the rest of your life.”

“I owe that man a life debt,” he told them. “I will defend him.”

“Don’t worry, Obi-Wan kept him from dying just then, I felt him use the force. And I would hardly kill him in cold blood like this. I just want to impress upon Han here a few things. You awake, Han?”

“What’s the big idea,” Han finally managed. “What did you do to me?”

“Still not a believer in the force? Look at those men. Look at them! They were *helpless*. There was no cause for you to shoot them like that.”

“They’re imperial soldiers,” he protested. “You would defend them?”

“They’re *people*. I wouldn’t even kill a droid the way you just tried to, especially if it was *helpless*.”

“You’re a fool. This galaxy will chew you up and spit you out with an attitude like that. I’m still alive today because I shoot first and I don’t ask any questions later.”

“Thank you for confirming that, it makes what I have to say next much easier. Once we’re away from here, I never want to see you again. No matter what your role would have been in all this, that kind of ‘help’ I don’t need.”

“You think I would stick around after this anyway?”

“So you have some brains, that’s good to know.”

“There’s another thing you didn’t consider,” Jenny told him.

“Oh? Now you’re going to pour the salt in? Fine, fine, don’t hold back. Let old Han know what you’re thinking.”

“If you had killed him, an officer of the empire, and on duty no less, you think there would be anywhere in the galaxy you could go to be safe? You think staying one step ahead of this Jaba of yours is hard, try being a criminal wanted by the empire for murdering an officer. Right now they are the legitimate government. Trying and sentencing you, if they even bother here, would be both *legal* and *expected*.”

“I must admit she has a point,” Chewbacca agreed. “We don’t need more trouble in our lives, Han. We’re in enough just being here. At the moment the worst we could get is aiding them, but we could legitimately say they told us nothing and be believed. We were paid to bring them here, asked no questions, knew nothing about them. They would let us go. We murder someone here, different story.”

“Fine, I get it, okay? I’ll just politely ask anyone I consider a threat to reconsider their position. I’m sure that’ll work wonders.”

"Don't get pissy," Chewbacca told him. "You know you have impulse control issues."

"HA!"

Lysanias spoke up again. "Now we are going to secure these men, *not* shoot them, and you two are taking their place. That way if anyone looks up here it'll be business as usual. Luke, Obi-Wan, strip them."

"Why do I have to do it?" Luke complained.

Lysanias' head slowly turned to him.

"Okay, I'm doing it! I'm stripping a man."

He looked back at Han. "Are you all right? I'll heal you too, if not."

"I hit pretty hard, actually."

"Where?" He let the man go, and Han turned around, showing his back. "Fine, it's just bruising, I can heal that easily. Stand still."

"You really must be careful," Obi-Wan told him as he healed Han's back. "What you did, almost killing Han? That was the dark side of the force."

"The what side? It has sides? What is it, a coin?"

"The dark side. Aggression. Hatred. These are the emotions a Jedi must be on guard against."

"So we should become droids? It wasn't 'dark side,' it was me trying to save a man's life and using a skill augmented by the sword. Yes, I should have just used metal bending to get the gun away from him. But given what I saw back on the planet, I thought a more direct lesson might be needed. That when you're with me, you don't go around killing people."

"I'm right here you know. And I heard you the first time."

"The Jedi use the force for knowledge and defense, never attack. I shouldn't have shown you..."

He snorted. "Then it's no wonder you got wiped out. There, how does that feel?"

Obi-Wan started to protest, but then just looked grave and thoughtful.

Han did some stretches and tucked his shirt back in. "Better. Thanks."

"Great. Get into those clothes and we'll come up with the next part of our plan."

"I'm not wearing this," protested Luke.

He sighed. "*You're* not. Han and Chewbacca are staying here, so they don't go shooting any more helpless people. I obviously can't trust them."

"I'm not going to fit in that," Chewbacca protested.

"Not yet!" His eyes gleamed.

"I have a bad feeling about this..."

"And why do you have so many pairs of handcuffs?" Lysanias asked Jenny. She had produced a pair for their hands and feet, and the two had been stuffed in a closet under threat that they would be shot, by Han, if they made too much fuss.

"After all, he's shot you once. The man is obviously unbalanced so it's best to not push it. Just stay quiet, and after we leave you can attract attention and get rescued. Everybody lives, got it?"

They got it. He didn't shut the door yet, he needed their faces for what he was going to do next.

"Oh, handcuffs are useful in so many situations," she said with a wink. "Maybe I'll show you sometime."

"Fuzzy ones, I expect," Han snickered.

"Oh, we have similar tastes! Too bad you're not my type."

"What? No-"

"If we could stay on track?" Obi-Wan asked dryly. "We are in enemy territory here?"

"Exactly. Let's see what our friendly droid can do." Lysanias got out the ward holding R2-D2 and released him. "I think that's a data port, right?" he asked.

"We got inside?" they chirped. "Neat. And you found me a data port to play with. What a swell guy you are. Always wanted a peek inside the imperial network, give me a second." They plugged in. "Oh yeah, that's the stuff all right. Come to daddy, little data!"

"Glad you're so excited about it. While they poke around, what our next move?"

"I still don't understand how I'm supposed to fit into these," complained Chewbacca, holding up the clothes.

"Just suck in, Chewy," Han told him.

"Not helping."

"We need to shut down the tractor beam somehow," Obi-Wan reasoned. "Then we can fly out of here."

"And into thousands of hostile ships out here? Great plan!" Luke told him.

"There was only the one coming in."

"Sure, but as soon as that ship moves," he pointed out the window, "they'll launch all fighters."

"We'll be long gone by the time they scramble. We can start the calculations for the jump before we take off."

"Oh. That's fine."

Meanwhile Lysainas was looking over the man Chewbacca was going to turn into, and touched him. His power flowed out and suddenly a very startled looking human stood there.

"What did you do to me?" he complained, looking his arms over. "I've lost all my hair! And am I shorter?"

"By quite a bit. Come on, get those clothes on. Han, you're next."

"This isn't permanent, is it?" He was feeling his face, a look of horror on it.

"Don't worry about it. It's only temporary, it wears off. You'll be fine. Pants!"

"How do you put these things on? Ugh, my legs, they're so short now! How can you do this to me?"

"Luke, help him. Chewy, stop complaining. Han, come on, let's get on with this." *Jenny, keep standing there and covering the door like at least one of us is a professional. Oh, you're doing that? Great job!*

When that was done Lysainas took a deep breath. *Have to remember I don't have limitless energy now. Doing all this stuff drains me. Although...* He looked the two helpless soldiers over. The one looked back at him, eyes wide, not believing what he was seeing. *Yeah, he's probably going to look at the world differently when this is over. The other is still unconscious, I hope he wakes up, repairing brain damage, I don't know. Still, may as well not let his energy go to waste when he's a source I can tap into.*

He drained some energy from each until he felt back up to his normal amount, and looked the group over. Chewbacca was strapping on his helmet, which reminded Lysainas he had a helmet to repair. He went over and did that, handing it to Han.

"I think you left a jabby bit inside," he complained, running his hands over the inside.

"It could have been an oversight, I agree. Or it could be a little reminder of the life you almost took. Now look these controls over and look busy." He turned back to Obi-Wan. "Did you figure out a way to disable this beam you were talking about?"

"I think so. R2 has found a way to disable the beam without raising any alarms. They'll simply power it up, nothing will happen, and they'll have to run some diagnostics on the system. Meanwhile we get away clean."

"Downside," they beeped, "it has to be done on site. Someone will have to go over there and turn some levers. I can't do it in software."

"Could you lead us there?"

"I'll do that," Obi-Wan offered. "The force can guide me, and let me stay out of sight."

"You can navigate this entire *enormous* station that you've never seen, do it undetected, turn off a system you know nothing about, and get back here?" Han

seemed incredulous. "Maybe there is something to this whole force stuff you go on about. Except for throwing people around the room, I mean."

"I'm not apologizing for that," Lysanias told him.

"Wouldn't expect you to."

"He has a point though, I couldn't do all that. Are you sure about that plan?"

"I'm sure. Wait for me on the ship, I'll be back." He waited at the door, decided no one was on the other side, and slipped out. It closed.

"Well, he's dead!" Han jovially explained. "Now what's *our* plan to get out of here?"

"My plan is to steal some armor, and pose as a guard by the door," Jenny told them. "I don't want to be caught in here. How about it, Lysanias? Think your spirit can track some down? There must be a locker room or storeroom with some that are unattended."

"Good idea."

"What spirit? You never did explain," Luke told them.

"I feel funny," Chewbacca complained. "I think I have organs I didn't have before..." He kept shifting in his seat.

"You'll be fine," Lysanias told him. "And I'll explain what all my powers *specifically* do when we're out of danger. I'm from another world, I can do stuff. I told you that days ago. That should be good enough for you."

"For now, anyway," Jenny agreed.

The spirit slipped out to go looking for armor to steal, meanwhile the trio stayed away from the windows and hoped someone didn't come up here.

"Hey, I've been poking around their network," R2 piped up. "I think Leah is here."

"She's here?" Luke asked, excitedly.

"Who?" the others asked.

"The girl in the message! Of course, they would bring a prisoner of her obvious importance here. Can we get her out somehow?"

"What message?" Lysanias asked.

"The one that started all this. Where is she?"

"Level 5, detention block AA-23. I can guide you, if we can find a communicator around here."

*Level 5? Phss, Terra was level seven right from the start. And that joke will go way, way over their heads.* "I've got a ward that'll do the same thing. Once we find some armor I suppose a rescue mission could be done."

"You really would?" Luke asked. His face darkened. "I saw her first!"

"Not really the issue, but okay. And rescue someone? What about me suggests I wouldn't? I'm not Han."

"True. You want to bury droids, and don't want anyone around here to die."

"And you do?"

"Apparently Darth Vader killed my father. Probably my mother too, I never asked about her but Obi-Wan didn't say. I wouldn't mind him dying, especially if it was at my hand."

*Oh, and this isn't 'dark side' as you called it, Obi-Wan?* "As long as it's for the right reason."

The group waited a few moments until the mountain spirit came back, laden down with armor it had stolen from somewhere.

"Thanks," Lysanias told it, and it bowed.

"Now to figure out what goes where," Luke decided, as it was all in a big jumble. "I think this is a chest plate..."

Lysanias stored his own armor and the group took off enough clothes to fit into the armor. That meant his relics and sword, leaving him his normal, pathetically weak self. *I already miss those things. Good thing this armor seems to be made of a*

*lightweight material.* They looked each other over and decided that was as good as they could do, and Lysanias picked up his helmet. He stuck a communication ward to the inside of it, on the edge, and the companion one on R2-D2. "We should be able to talk through that," he explained. "Just tell us where to go."

"You'll probably have to open doors and things," Jenny told them. "We won't have the keycards or passcodes to do it ourselves."

"Wait, if there's anything like that how will Obi-Wan get though?" Luke asked.

"There isn't," R2-D2 told him. "Believe me. There are some restricted area, yes, but this is the heart of the empire. They didn't really believe rebels would make it here and then start wandering around. You can go wherever you want. At least, until you make the actual rescue. Then you're going to have a problem."

"I've got that covered."

"Still, the place should be on alert because an enemy ship was just pulled into the place. Keep an eye out," Jenny told them.

"I've got the cameras in the corridors under control, I can watch your progress."

"Great. We'll get going." He put the helmet on and grabbed up the rifle that had come with the uniform. "Does this thing have a stun... Oh wait, I see that it does." He made the adjustment and made sure Luke's gun was set that way as well.

"Ever use one of these?" Jenny asked him.

"Not really, no. This is the first reality I've been that had them in such abundance."

"It's pretty easy. Just pull this while aiming this part in the direction you want the blast to go. I have no idea the fire rate or how much recoil it'll have, but if we're lucky we won't need to shoot anyone at all. My advice is just keep pulling the trigger if it comes to that."

"Not shooting anyone would be preferable." *And I can't augment my skill with it because I have no skill at it. Well, like she said, I would rather not shoot anybody. Let's get in and get out without anyone even noticing.*

With the way still clear the group opened the door, but Lysanias had a thought and handed a contain ward to Han. "Look, if someone comes, get R2-D2 out of sight. Just put this on him and will him inside. Then hide it."

"Okay." He looked doubtfully at it but took it. "Good luck. And I guess, may the force be with you."

"Thanks. Let's go."

They moved out into the hallway and into the heart of enemy territory.

## Chapter 7

There Isn't any Other way Out

When: A moment later

Where: The corridors of the Death Star

"If you can hear me, you'll need to take a right at the next fork," the ward inside Lysanias' helmet reported.

"Got it. Han hasn't shot anyone in the thirty seconds we've been gone, has he?"

"No, he's been fiddling with his gun, I think it might have been damaged when it flew out of his hand and hit the ground."

*Good.*

"I'm routing any requests that would usually come in to this station to others, so he doesn't make a fool of himself and give us away. Naturally I made it seem the responses were coming from here. This place has crap security, they really didn't expect anyone to get this far. Downloaded some nice music for your friend. I hope she likes the imperial march, they've got about a hundred different versions of it. I'm resisting the urge to optimize their maintenance schedules, mess with their hot water so half the place gets scalding hot stuff while the other freezes, or cause all the elevators to fail in such a way they spell out 'suck it' within the walls. I could, you know."

"Er, that's great. How many things can you do at once, anyway?"

"Uh, thousands? I'm all computing power, no legs."

"Huh." *Makes one feel almost inadequate.*

"Did you know this place is 160km long with 357 internal levels? They built it in such a way that as it spins gravity is simulated, negating the need to power artificial gravity generators. They didn't want to waste the power, because it's more they can feed into their super weapon. Which can fire once a day at full strength, by the way. With Alderaan destroyed we have at least most of a day before they can fire again. My goodness they've got 15,000 Turbolaser batteries! Way to overbuild this place."

*You know, telling him I could understand him may have been a mistake.* "You don't get to talk to people very much, do you?"

"Oh, does it show? Sorry about that, I guess I am talking your ear off, huh? Turn left up ahead, some elevators will be on your left. Don't go right, there's a very long drop and only a small railing right next to them."

"Right."

"No, left. Turn left, not right. Right is big fall, go splat."

"I mean I got it."

"Oh, sure, sorry, I get it. Carry on."

"So what's the plan?" Luke asked as the three stood and waited for the elevator to come down.

"Depends how the detention block is guarded. It's the four of us, you two gun users and us two everything else users. You can shoot all you want as long as it's not lethal, I'll try to stay to the side and keep anyone from shooting at us with my abilities." *Wish I knew what I was better at. Metal bending or the force. Probably metal bending, given I absorbed Beifong who was at her peak rather than Obi-Wan who is not. Plus the other metal benders I saw would have added a bit. Just wish I had my relics, or my better armor. Guess we'll just have to hope it works out. That would be an interesting ward or talisman. An offshoot of contain, the properties of whatever is inside are transmitted to the holder. So I could put my armor in there, be "wearing" it but only just have a piece of paper stuck to me.*

"There's four people in the room at present," R2-D2 told him. "Only two are armed, none are wearing any kind of armor. I've recorded some footage and can loop it once you get in there, there's cameras all over the place. But it won't fool someone for long, and I don't know how much scrutiny they receive. So get in and get out."

“Right. Four people in the room,” he relayed. “Two armed.”

“R2 can see all that?” Luke asked. “That’s impressive.”

“I’ve found that in realities like this one, with computers everywhere, hacking solves most problems,” Jenny told them. “So I’m not surprised.”

“Hacking?” Lysanias asked.

“What he’s doing. Subverting the systems, making them work for us instead of against us.”

“Hacking, have to remember that word. R2-D2 did say security here was terrible, at least on their end.”

“It’s like they didn’t understand basic computer security at all,” R2 followed up. “I mean no air gaped systems, everything’s just on one big network. Laughable encryption, any AI I run into assumes I should be here because I’m on premises, doesn’t even hassle me. How these people haven’t been p0wend by every script kiddy in the universe I’ll never know.”

“Uh, you know I have no idea what any of those words mean, right? I don’t know that much about technology, you may as well just be blooping and beeping at me.”

“Sorry, I’m just a little worked up about jacking into a system like this one. I mean how many times in your life do you get to do that? Here come the cars.”

*Cars? Those things people rode around in on Korra’s world?* He looked right and left, but it was just people.

The doors opened and the elevator was empty, so the group stepped inside. *Oh, I guess it’s just what they call these elevator boxes. At least I know what an elevator is. We had them back home, the alchemist fixed it up for the Mage’s guild.*

“Had to make sure it was empty before I sent it down to you. Okay, this one is going straight to the prison level. Get ready.”

“When those doors open we’ll be there,” he told them.

“Right,” they acknowledged.

A moment later the doors indeed opened, and the group looked the scene over. As best they could, with those stupid helmets on.

*Shoot, too bad I couldn’t have absorbed more of that Jedi mind trick. It wasn’t exactly physical so it should have worked, but maybe my potential finally ran out. It didn’t seem to work, anyway. I could have used it to just make them hand this Leah over to us. Given it didn’t work on Han every time, I’d hate to mess it up. Ah well.*

There were indeed four people in the room, a man wearing just a uniform in front of a set of odd looking controls. These were arrayed in a semicircle around him, and he looked up at their approach. Behind him and to his left, Lysanias’ right, stood two men in funny helmets. Lysanias could not imagine why such a ridiculous helmet would exist, it didn’t protect the face, and looked so oversized on the men’s heads it must have cut 40% of peripheral vision and 50% of sound. *It’s more like a tent than a helmet, it’s stupid.* They were the ones with the guns. Straight back was a long corridor and there was a man pacing it, who also turned as the doors opened.

The group stepped out, getting into a good position, and the tension in the room went up a little.

“We don’t have any transfers scheduled,” the man at the “desk” told them. “What are you three doing up here?”

“Yeah, couldn’t put in a transfer request, sadly,” R2-D2 explained. “That system does have some decent security.”

“Are you beeping?” the man asked. “You should get that looked at.”

*Right, all he hears is whatever people that can’t understand all languages hear. Whatever passes for R2-D2’s “speech.”*

“You didn’t get the transfer orders we did? Look, we just go where we’re told to,” Jenny told them. “If you didn’t get the same copy of our orders, what are doing up here then?”

"That's what I want to know, and why do you sound like a girl?"

*Oh, are all stormtroopers male? Great, just great. Well, it's not like we weren't going to shoot these guys.*

"I have a cold."

"A what?"

The two at the back now looked at each other and went for their guns, perhaps sensing something was wrong with this situation. The mountain spirit couldn't have that, so it metal bent the helmet of the one, trying to knock him into the other one. This worked out very well, and the two men tumbled the ground, their heads knocking together. The closer man turned to see what the commotion was, and Luke took that opportunity to shoot him. Naturally the shot went wild, because he had no training in this weapon, and the man knew he was under attack.

He lunged for the control panel, probably to hit some kind of alarm button, and Lysanias couldn't have that so he reached out with the force, intending to shove the man backwards, instead. This caught the man totally off guard, and he went flying into the short set of stairs behind him, crying out. He went still.

*Oh come on, I'm not augmented by the sword anymore, he can't be dead, right?*

The man down the tunnel started running towards them, so Jenny shot him. This staggered him, but he didn't fall. She was pulling the trigger as fast as she could, but the gun didn't fire again.

"Piece of junk," she cursed. "Fire rate on this gun is terrible!"

The spirit, which had been moving this whole time, now had line of sight to the two men and metal bent their guns away from them as they were still trying to untangle themselves. They went flying.

Lysanias grabbed hold of the man he had slammed before, thinking he might as well make himself useful, and threw him into the man that was just about to make it to the stairs otherwise. They both went down.

Jenny shrugged and pointed her gun downward, putting a couple of shots into the other two with Luke's "help." (Out for four shots only one hit. He really was a terrible shot, and that helmet he was wearing wasn't helping.)

Lysanias meanwhile was checking over the two he had thrown about, and found they were still alive and breathing. They just had bruises, so would probably be fine in short order given medical technology in that reality. (So he hoped, but it stood to reason that medical and other forms of knowledge would increase at roughly the same rate.)

*Good to know. I can take someone down without the sword, but would probably kill them with it. Wonder if I could exert more "control" like Obi-Wan said and use the sword but still not hurt someone too badly?*

"Let's find where Leah is," Luke decided, the threat in this room taken care of.

"Uh, just open all of them," Lysanias told him. "You think we just came just for her? Anyone in these cells is getting out." *I know how being in jail feels, and I'm pretty sure anyone in here is going to be some kind of rebel or political prisoner, not someone violent or something.*

"Oh, right, of course. Silly of me. It won't look suspicious, all of us roaming the halls back to the ship."

"We're not going to- just do it!"

"Okay, I'm going!"

*Can that guy do anything without whining about it?* Lysanias didn't know how many people would be released so as Luke and Jenny swiftly opened all the cell doors he got out his sash, buckled on his bracelet, and got his sword out. Beings of all types tumbled out, the cells were very small, and milled around in confusion as to what was going on.

"Listen up!" Jenny yelled, when it was clear Lysanias wasn't going to speak up. "We're getting out of here. It's going to be fairly unconventional, so you're just going to have to trust us. Everybody gather in a circle around the guy with the sword. Touch him,

or someone touching him, and we can be on our way.” She followed her own directions, planting herself in front of him and grabbing his shoulder.

“What’s going on?” one being with a pointed head demanded.

“You’ve got two choices,” Jenny told them. “You can do as I said, or you can go back in your cell and rot here for the rest of your lives. Make up your minds, but we’re leaving on a count of ten! One!”

*Wow, she’s so forceful. How does she do that? I couldn’t just order a bunch of people around like that...*

“It’s some kind of trick!” said another, a short being with a smooth head and big eyes.

“Why would they let us out as a trick?” another asked him. “I mean look, are those guys taking a nap or what?” They pointed at the unconscious soldiers laying on the ground.

“But how is standing in a circle and touching that alien going to help?” demanded another. “We can’t just wish ourselves out of here.”

“Are you willing to take that chance? Five.” Jenny asked them.

“I’m not,” announced one. “I’ll do anything, no matter how ridiculous sounding, to get out of here.” They went over and grabbed him. The others, seeing no alternative, did the same. Luke came up last, as he was covering the door not that R2-D2 would have let the elevator open on that floor.

“Everyone touching me?” Lysanias asked. “Get as close as you can, we’re going into a confined space I don’t want any of you dying.”

There were no negative replies, and everyone squished together, so he *shifted*.

The group found itself in the living area of the Falcon, and Lysanias figured they were basically home free at this point. He neglected several aspects of physics, however, which will now be related to you, the reader. One, displacing this number of people in space displaced a lot of air instantly. Because of this, there was a tremendous wind that tore through the Falcon’s living area, bowling stuff over. Two, this much wind rushing everywhere all at once caused a very loud explosion sound, completely startling the already jumpy scanning team that was down the hall prying up the compartment lids. They seriously thought they were going to die because the ship was blowing itself up. It also alerted the two troopers standing just down the ramp, because this ship had no airlock. Apparently no one had thought they would ever need to go out in space *while in space* to, I don’t know, make repairs or whatever. So they were pushed over by the wind and recovered, then spun and looked up the ramp to see what the heck was going on.

They saw a dozen escaped prisoners and our team of intrepid heroes.

They raised their guns.

“Uh, control, we’ve got a ship full of people here all of a sudden,” the one trooper said into his helmet mic. “I don’t know where they were hiding, but there’s a dozen of them!”

“Acknowledged,” said Han, where the signal was currently being routed to because it was the closest control booth to where they were. Lysanias could hear the chatter through the ward, faintly but enough. “I’ll get some people down there right away.”

“What are your orders?”

“Keep them contained, of course. They aren’t going anywhere, are they? There’s just that ramp. If any come down it, shoot them.”

“No sir. Yes sir, I’ll keep them contained.”

“Good.” There was a pause. “Tell that guy he was supposed to rescue one woman, not a whole shipload of people. If I find anything missing aboard my ship...”

“Sir? Can you repeat that, I don’t understand the order. Who am I telling, this guy?” He pointed over to his companion. “And who are they rescuing?”

“What’s that? Chewy how do you turn this stupid intercom-”

The two troopers looked at each other, and the one made a motion with his hand to go get help.

He nodded and stalked off.

Back aboard ship the people that had just teleported were freaking out.

“How did we get here?” demanded one.

“Just remain calm, and find a place by the wall to stand. We’ll be underway soon,” Jenny told them.

“That doesn’t answer the question!” said another.

“Let’s just say I’m not your father’s Jedi,” Lysanias told the being.

“My grandfather *was* a Jedi,” claimed one. “He couldn’t do anything like that!”

“And so you know every Jedi trick in the book, is that it?”

“Well, no...”

“So do what I said!” Jenny yelled, pointing away from him. “Go, make a path in case someone comes up here. We’ll need the space to shoot back at them.” They sullenly complied, and both Luke and Jenny took up positions to shoot anyone that came through the gate.

“Han’s angry you rescued so many people,” R2-D2 told him. “In case you didn’t hear that. But we’ve stalled the troopers for now. They’re expecting backup, I don’t know how long they’ll wait. No, wait, the one is moving off. Han didn’t turn the intercom off properly. I think you’ll have company sooner than you think.”

“Great. And I’m not worried about Han, he would be upset if I hung him with a new rope. He would complain it was too stiff. Where’s Obi-Wan?”

“Not even half way there. It’s going to be at least ten or fifteen minutes before he can get back.”

“Oh, that’s just super.” *We should have timed this better. Leah wasn’t going anywhere, we should have rescued her when Obi-Wan was on the way back! Stupid oversight, as usual Lysanias. Nicely done.* “We’re about to get a lot of company, and it’s going to come down to a gunfight on the ramp. Suggestions?”

“Let’s give them something else to think about,” Jenny offered. “Like a lot of fires and such in the bay!”

“How are we going to set anything on fire in here?” Luke asked.

“I have an idea. Come with me.” She grabbed Lysanias’ hand, tossed her gun to someone who nodded their thanks, and pulled him towards the cockpit. He tossed his gun as well, and let himself be dragged along. (Rather than just staying there and tearing her arm out of the socket.)

“There, right by that ship,” she decided, pointing. “Can you get us there?”

“Sure. Oh, you want to shoot the place up?” *Because if this “adaptive skill” of hers can fly the falcon, it could fly one of those ships as well.*

“Exactly.”

“Take the focus away from us. Okay, I don’t think anyone is looking. We’re going... Now!” He *shifted*.

They found themselves by the TIE fighter, and Jenny climbed into it, waving Lysanias up. “You don’t want to be standing right there in a second.”

“Tight fit,” he remarked, sliding in behind her.

“Good thing I like you. Now hang on!” She pressed some buttons and the machine roared to life. “R2 was right, the security around here is terrible. I don’t even need a password to start this thing.” She made it lift off and then just spun the thing in a circle, firing the whole time. This exploded a bunch of stuff, but Lysanias noticed she only fired at inanimate objects like the others ships in the bay, and not at people.

“Thank you for being careful,” he said to her.

“Remind me to tell you about a girl named Sakura sometime. She went bad, and I don’t want to end up like her... Okay, get us back into the Falcon.”

"Wait, point this ship out the window and get it ready to fly. Show me what you need to do in order to make it go full speed."

"Okay?" She pointed it right and showed him. While he did he dismissed the mountain spirit, which had just been sort of hanging out this whole time.

"Now we go." He grabbed her and *shifted*.

"But we're back here," she protested, as they appeared where they had left from. "Can you use the force at this distance?"

"Not the force, my spirit is going over there." *You understand what you have to do?*

*I do.*

Unseen by them, but as Lysanias knew where it had to go it could appear inside, the spirit took the controls and threw them forward. The ship roared out of the bay and the spirit vanished almost at once because it was so fast. But it kept going, as there was no one in the cockpit to tell it to slow down now.

"Ah, they'll think someone's still in there, and go chasing after *it!* That's pretty good."

"Thanks. With some luck it'll blow up or something, and we'll be totally in the clear."

"And when the ships come back, we leave, so they're all confused about 'go back out? We just got back!'" She laughed.

"Let's hope so."

The group held their breath, waiting to see what would happen.

## Chapter 8

It's not Going to Take Them Long to Figure out What Happened to Us

When: A moment later

Where: The cockpit of the Falcon

*The trouble with having all these troops, Lysanias thought to himself, is that they're like ants. Probably not all that capable on their own, but working together they can accomplish big things in short order.*

White armored figures swarmed around the bay, putting out fires and trying to figure out what was going on. Meanwhile, *other* white armored figures got ready to storm the Falcon. They were somewhat stymied by Lysanias' spirit standing in the walkway because they couldn't tell how to get up there, but didn't understand why. *We hoped that would distract them but there's so many of them they can do everything all at once. So why did we bother?*

"What are you all waiting for?" someone demanded from behind them. "Take off! We need to escape!"

Jenny and Lysanias turned, and there was a tiny lady standing there, hands on her hips. She was wearing all white and had her hair done up in two bunches on the sides of her head. Luke came up behind her. She came up to about his chin, that's how short she was. She was fairly pretty, but radiated impatience.

"This is Leah, by the way," he lamely introduced.

"Nice to meet you. Why haven't we taken off?"

"We're missing our pilot, your droid with the information that started all this, and our Jedi master," Jenny explained.

"Oh right, my droid! Where are they all?"

She pointed. "The pilot and the droid are over there, in that booth. Our Jedi is trying to shut the tractor beam down."

"Jedi? Do you mean Obi-Wan? Are you defecting? Why are storm troopers causing all these problems?"

"No, no, we're in disguise," she told her. "We don't normally look like this. And yes, Obi-wan."

"AH!"

"I told you that!" Luke protested.

"You have an untrustworthy face, what can I say?"

"I was wearing the helmet! You hadn't seen my face yet."

"Is that why you looked like that? Well, those storm troopers out there aren't going to wait around forever, and can someone tell me what that rock looking guy is doing standing out there? He'll get shot for sure! And why can't anyone else seem to see him?"

The two looked at each other. "Bingo," said Jenny.

"So it seems," Lysanias agreed.

"What?"

"Seems with training you can use the force," she explained. "If you want to learn, that is. For now, see if you can find a weapon around here and keep those people down there from panicking. Once Obi-Wan returns we'll be on our way."

"What about the pilot? Or more importantly that R2 unit?"

"That's the easy part, believe me."

"You call getting way over there and back with all those troopers running around easy? You must be pretty good."

"Oh, I get by."

"All right, I'll tell them, but I'm not sure they'll be reassured." Leah turned to go, brushing past Luke.

"I saw her first!" he whispered, and left.

"Boy, he's as protective as a big brother," Jenny said, turning back to see what

was going on.

“You got that right,” Lysanias agreed. *Though the word I would have used was ‘possessive’ but maybe it’s a translation issue?*

“Say, can you get us out of here?” R2-D2 asked through the ward. “There are some people banging on the door, so I think now is a good time.”

Lysanias looked over at the booth, trying to judge the distance. *I think that’s within range. I don’t want my spirit moving from that ramp so I’m stuck here. But I think I can get that far at least.* “On my way. Jenny, keep the hallway outside this door clear, I’ll come back there.”

“You got it.”

He concentrated on being “over there” and *shifted*, popping in behind the two shouting that they were trying to get the door open, but it must be stuck. Lysanias figured *why not make that the truth?* and metal bent it so it was twisted out of shape. *As I’m not sure what it’s made of, I don’t want to risk alchemy on it. I would have preferred swelling it, but oh well. At least it’s still metal, and impure enough to have metal bending work. That should hold them off for a bit.*

“You fellows need a ride?” he asked, as R2-D2 unplugged from the system. He grabbed the communication ward so no evidence got left behind (as though all this didn’t scream outside interference by wanderers anyway) and held out a hand. “Wait, one second.” He opened the closet door, and the two bound and gagged men looked up at him. “Great news, you lived! Just need to top up, it won’t hurt a bit.” He grabbed some energy from the men, and closed the door again.

“What was that all about?” Chewbacca asked.

“Getting some energy back, now that I don’t have unlimited amounts of it. We going or not?”

They both grabbed on, and Han touched R2-D2.

“We’re off.” He *shifted*.

Han tossed his helmet off, obviously glad to be out of it, and looked the controls of the Falcon over. “Seems fine. Just how many people did you rescue anyway?”

“I didn’t do a headcount.”

“Or you did, and you just don’t want me freaking out more. I get it. Falcon seems fine, oddly they haven’t thought of draining the fuel to make sure it doesn’t take off.”

“Would that be easy to do?”

“Sure.”

“Odd. Well, they’ve had a lot of things to worry about. I’ll go watch the ramp, make sure no one tries to get up it.”

“It goes without saying, don’t take off,” Jenny cautioned him. “We’re not leaving Obi-Wan behind, and we need to know if he managed to take out the tractor beam. If he didn’t manage it we’ll have to go down ourselves or think of another plan.”

“I wasn’t even thinking it.”

Chewbacca looked at him.

“Honest!”

“Just so it’s clear.” She walked back down the corridor, and Lysanias followed.

More and more people were milling around the ramp, then officers started showing up to find out what the hold up was. They didn’t fare any better, though at least one was animatedly pointing at the spirit and arguing with someone. It waved at them, and he became even more animated. *Looks like people that can use the force are all over the place. Imagine going through life, able to do amazing things, and just being completely ignorant of it. I suppose people might pick up on various parts of the force, the non-physical stuff. They must just consider themselves “lucky” without knowing why. They move at the right time to avoid an attack, or something tells them they need to be*

*somewhere, and they just write it off. It's strange, from what the others have told me the empire is the legitimate government here. Maybe they came into power in a way that was wrong, but why did they kill all the Jedi? They were like city guards back home from what Obi-Wan told me. Just on a bigger scale. You don't kill all your guards if you take over a city, you just tell them what to do and they do it. They work for the government, killing them doesn't make sense. If they refuse to do the work, you fire them. If they act outside the law on their own, you try them. But no, they were all killed and training in the force stopped. Now you have all these people running around that could be doing so much more, but who aren't. You're shooting yourself in the foot by not having force users around doing what needs be done.*

The soldiers tried repeatedly to run up the ramp but with the mountain spirit in the way, grown to a larger size and simply sitting there, none could manage it. He even started to feel a little sorry of them, it was just too easy, but then, none of them were getting killed and neither were the rescued prisoners. So that's really what mattered. Moments passed, and Lysanias noticed a commotion off to the side, and the spirit leaned a bit to see what was going on. Some distance away through a wide door Obi-Wan was fighting a guy with a light saber. He wasn't doing so well, and seemed to give up, closing his eyes and putting his saber up. *Oh crap!* Lysanias had his sword out from before, teleporting everyone back here, so as the dark cloaked figure drew his saber back to strike he *shifted*, getting into position. It was large enough, he simply held it on the left side of his body, as the saber was coming from right to left. As he appeared it smashed against the blade, and the helmeted figure looked down at him. His breathing was audible, and even through the mask shock registered in his form.

*Oh, right, this must be that guy they keep talking about. That guy with the name I can't get right. What was it? I should address him, say something at least. Oh man it's getting awkward, this is terrible. I have to call him something, what would his name logically be? I've never had trouble with names before, why just this guy. Lysanias, say something!*

"Black... Helmet... Man. So we meet at last." *No, that can't be his name! Anything but- too late. Roll with it, get out of there.* "I would prefer you didn't kill Obi-Wan here. If you do I would have to take over Luke's training and that guy whines about everything! You know anyone like that?" *That's not getting out of there! What are you doing?* "Anyway, must run. I'm sure we'll see you again soon!" He grabbed Obi-Wan and *shifted*.

The mountain spirit shoved the people in front of it, knocking them off the platform, and they tumbled. Lysanias ran over and hit the button to close it, screaming "We're all here! Let's go!"

"I'm still alive?" Obi-Wan said, cracking an eye open. "That's odd."

"Did you get the tractor beam controls offline?" Jenny asked him.

"They're down, we can leave," he agreed.

"Han, punch it!"

"Only I get to say punch it!" But the ship rose, and R2-D2 plugged in to help speed up the calculations for lightspeed. "Uh, where are we going by the way?"

"Anywhere but here!"

"Sure, right, driver's choice. Fine."

The ship roared out of the bay, making many, many storm troopers afraid they were in for a bad night, and the Falcon started dodging enemy fire.

"I would have been fine with dying there," Obi-Wan remarked to no one in particular. He lowered his saber. "I always knew that was my destiny."

"Yeah? Well, I wasn't. And destiny can just deal."

"We have incoming!" Han called. "A bunch of fighters coming up!"

"I'll man one of the guns!" Luke called, heading in that direction.

"No!" Lysanias told him, catching up and grabbing him. "No killing! How many times do I have to tell you people this? Besides isn't that 'dark side?'" He shot a glance

at Obi-Wan.

“We can’t just not shoot back! What do you suggest?”

“I thought we were going to jump out of here right away?”

“Still need a minute. Get those guns going!” Han told them.

“Wait, there must be something else we can do!”

“I’m open to suggestions!”

*Can’t do anything about them, out there. Have to do something to the ship. Something I can do from in here. I can’t make the ship invulnerable, not without magic. Which I suppose I could do. Can’t shrink it, or put it in a contain ward. My spirit riding on top also doesn’t seem feasible. I’m not a good enough light bender to get the whole ship, and they may not be finding it visibly anyway. Can’t metal bend the ships from here, they’re way too huge anyway. Are we going to have to shoot back? There must be a way to hide the ship, but all my ignore wards aren’t keyed to Han. He wouldn’t be able to find the controls anymore- Wait, I’ve got it!*

“Let my skill be augmented!” he cast, magical energy swirling around him. *I forgot how much that takes out of me. Better than dying.* He pulled his gloves off as he went over to the wall, and took the sword in his hand point down. Wasting no time he sliced his hand open, and yes, the sword cut really well. Blood splashed everywhere, and Jenny gasped. “What are you doing?”

“Hopefully hiding us,” he said, dropping the sword, but careful to do it so the edge didn’t slice through the floor. He smeared the blood on his finger, and then on the wall. *Be keyed to everyone in this ship. Allow us to be hidden!* He slammed a palm down on the design he had drawn, and the shooting stopped.

*I think that did it.*

He held his breath, blood dripping onto the sword below him, and had he been paying more attention he would have noticed it sinking into the metal. The sword runes were also glowing more brightly, but no one noticed.

“They’ve veered off, whatever you did must have worked,” Han told them. “Jump to hyperspace in twenty seconds.”

*That worked. I was able to hide the whole ship. Good thing I’ve been practicing my wards. This should hold a few minutes, twenty seconds is nothing.* He healed his hand and picked his sword blade up, noticing it was clean but thinking any blood that dripped had just missed it. He put it back in his sub-space pocket and turned to Jenny. “We did it!”

“Let’s go make sure everyone is okay.”

“Right, they may need healing.”

As the ship sailed through the hyperspace corridor Leah and Han were drawn together like a magnet and iron, mostly to snipe at each other.

“Not a bad bit of rescuing, if I do say so myself. So, you’re Leah, huh? I can see why we went out of our way to make sure you were safe.” He was looking her over in a very possessive manner.

“You didn’t do a thing. Who are you, anyway?” Leah asked. “Besides, they let us go. It’s the only explanation for the ease of our escape.”

“Name’s Han. Han Solo. And you think that was easy? It was made ten times harder because Mr. Pacifist back there didn’t want us shooting at anybody. My flying really saved the day.”

“That’s Mr. Pacifist... oh.” Lysanias trailed off. “Go on, why would they let us go?”

“To track where we go. Mark my words, there’s a homing beacon on this ship.”

“Not on this ship!” Han insisted.

“Why not? Does it have a cloaking device? Some sort of anti-tracking system installed?”

“Er...”

“It must give off a signal, I wonder if R2-D2 could find it?” Jenny asked.

“Hey, I should get C3-P0 out. He’s probably worried.” Lysanias went to do that, and get him caught up on recent events. R2-D2 was more than happy to scan for signals that shouldn’t be there, and was more than unhappy to report he actually found something.

“Seems to be in this area,” he told them. “Oh wait, I can’t point at things because I have no hands. I’m not bitter about it, it’s just how I was made. Point straight down for me someone. Okay, now to the right. Now closer to that spot on the floor...”

They finally got close enough that R2-D2 said that was fine, and the area was marked.

“What do we do about it?” Han asked.

“Just go out the airlock and, oh,” Jenny started to say. “Wait, you don’t have one, do you?”

“And who is going out into space, into the vacuum, and taking it off?”

“I will. My Oz kit was designed for operating in vacuum, I’ll be fine.” She tapped the thing on her shoulder, as the group was now back in their regular clothes. The stormtrooper uniforms were carefully packed away, just in case they could be useful again.

“Your what?”

“My Oz kit. They were supposed to be OZ kits of course, but the font they used made it look more like a ‘z’ so the name stuck.”

“What’s a font?” Lysanias asked.

“Who used it?” Han asked.

“The people that invented the Oz kit, of course. And a font refers to the style of writing that’s printed.”

“Oh,” both said.

“Excuse me,” one of the prisoners asked, “what’s going to happen to us?”

“I need to get back to the rebel base,” Leah told them. “Those plans can finally be delivered. You’re welcome to come with me, join the rebellion.”

Naturally everyone started talking at once, how most were no friend to the empire, of course, but they had their own lives to get back to. Leah called for quiet.

“Where are we headed, anyway?” she asked Han.

“I figured something like this might happen, so I set our course for Ixtlar. It’s got a pretty big port, people can go where they want to from there. As Alderaan got blown up I can’t exactly take you there, but I expect to be paid nonetheless. You can find someone to get you where you need to go from there.”

Leah looked down. “That was my homeworld, you know? They made me watch as they destroyed it.”

“I’m sorry. We felt it,” Lysanias told her. “Obi-Wan and me that is.”

“Oh, are you another Jedi that escaped the purge? Glad to have you, if you’re joining our cause?”

“I’ll be around for the foreseeable future.”

“That’s excellent news! And Obi-Wan, it’s nice to meet you in person at last. My father has told me stories about you.”

“All good ones, I hope.”

“I can’t believe half of them.”

“My fee?” Han reminded them.

“Yes, you’ll get it,” Obi-Wan told him. “But we should drop out of hyperspace and get that tracker off. Taking it anywhere will put that system in danger.”

“What’s an airlock?” Lysanias asked.

“Usually with ships like this there’s a small chamber you can go into,” explained Jenny. “You can seal it off, take the air out so it’s not lost, and then go out into space that way. You do the reverse coming back in. This ship was apparently designed to operate in atmosphere, despite being a spacecraft.”

“I see. Is there another door? Hatch? Anything?”

“There is a service hatch,” Han told them. “Same problem though.”

“Not really. If it’s a smaller area than the huge ramp that normally lowers it would be easier to seal off. I could seal it up partially, move the air out, and Jenny’s “Oz kit” would take over. Seal it up completely, open the door, find and remove this tracking thing you guys are talking about, and then get her back inside.”

“I have air for fifteen minutes, so it should be fine.”

“I’ll show it to you, maybe that could work. Everyone, sit tight,” he said to the amassed group. “We’ll just need to take care of a few things and we can get you on your way. In any case this is better than a cell, isn’t it? You’re free. Put up with it a little longer, and everything will be fine.”

They had no choice in the matter, really, so they went back to talking among themselves. He heard a bunch of languages, and C3-P0 went over to translate for those that didn’t know the human language.

“This way, let’s see about getting this tracker off my hull.”

## Chapter 9

We Feared the Worst

When: Moments later

Where: Looking at the Falcon's top hatch

"I don't mean to disturb you," said Chewbacca, walking up to the group. "But now that we're away and safe, could you do something about this?" He indicated himself in a general way.

"Ah, of course my good man," Lysanias told him. "You'll have to take those clothes off first."

"Gladly. I see why you humans wear them, but that doesn't mean I want to." He started to strip. "I suppose I should thank you for the opportunity to be another species for a time. Not many get that chance."

"You're still you, no matter what your shape."

"True."

With his clothes off Lysanias undid his transformation, and on Han as well. Chewbacca looked at Jenny, who was looking at the lift up to the door from every angle.

"What are you doing here, anyway?"

"We're trying to figure out if we can turn this into a temporary airlock," she explained. "We need to get a tracking device off the hull."

"Airlock? Why not just use the one we have?"

"The what?" Jenny stared at him, and then looked over at Han.

"We have an airlock?" he asked.

Chewbacca closed his eyes a moment. "Yes, Han, we have an airlock. Come on."

He led the group past the rescued beings and hit a button on the wall. It slid open and there was a tiny room they could use.

"Oh yeah, I totally forgot about that!" Han told them, snapping his fingers. "We always use the ramp so..."

"Excuse me," said Leah, walking up. "I've been asking around, some of the people here weren't being fed, so they would be easier to break. Can we get some food- who are you? And where did you come from?" she asked, looking up and up at Chewbacca.

"I'm Han. I was in disguise before. So was he."

"That must have been some disguise! Anyway, what sort of food stores do you have onboard? If it's going to take us more than a couple of hours to get where we're going I'd like to at least get these people a meal."

"That's nice of you. Considering it's my food. I guess I'll have to see what we've- wait, didn't you say you could make food? You implied..." he asked Lysanias, wiggling his fingers in the air.

"I can. But do they all eat roughly the same stuff? I can make a bunch of food and bring it out to them. If someone needs something different my power can account for that, but I would have to do it *for them* specifically. Meaning I would need to do it in front of them. I don't think I can explain food appearing out of thin air as a Jedi power."

"You can make food appear out of thin air?" she asked.

Lysanias paused. "Should not have said that. Should not have mentioned that at all."

"You're still new at this," Jenny consoled him. "You'll get better."

"To answer your question? Yes. Yes I can. Please don't ask how."

"I suppose that's fair. Tell you what, make what you can for now and if anyone says they can't eat it, I can bring them privately and while they look through the kitchen or whatever you can do whatever you need to do and pretend to "find" something."

"That would work," he agreed after a moment.

"Great! Let's see it!"

He sighed. "Fine."

The magic seemed oddly hesitant, in fact Lysanias wasn't sure it was going to work at all at first, but a magic circle finally snapped into place, and a moment later the normal pile of human food appeared.

*This spell is governed by the sun. We're going through some kind of "hyperspace corridor" according to them, so maybe the magic has trouble reaching through that to get to the nearest sun? I hate to think what trying magic governed by a specific planet will do, I don't even know if those planets exist in this reality. And I would be very, very far away from them even if they did. Skyebourne magic would be fine, that comes from my internal energy. Good thing I don't rely on it!*

She went off with that load and he cast several more times, making sure everyone could get their fill. Two people needed something different, so they were brought to the kitchen separately and Obi-Wan used the mind trick to keep them looking and not noticing what Lysanias was doing. They went back with an armload of whatever they needed to eat, and Leah came to thank him.

"You're a real life saver," she told him. "Thanks. I don't suppose you could teach me how to do that?"

"Sorry. I could teach you some Jedi stuff, but most of what I can do is unique to me alone."

"I see. Love to hear your story sometime, and are you actually offering to teach me Jedi stuff?" She grinned.

"I bet you're not as whiney as Luke, I'd be happy to," he replied shyly.

"That's great! Once we ditch this Han guy we can travel to our base and you can give me some lessons."

"If that's where Luke wants to go. I have my reasons for needing to stick by him."

"He's learning too, and we'll want Obi-Wan's advice for the coming battles. I'm sure they'll come too."

"No doubt." *She's probably a major player, given Luke's insistence in rescuing her. And given how he was all "I saw her first" he probably wants to be close to her.*

"Now, if you'll excuse me, I have to help get this tracking device off the ship."

"You don't mind if I watch, do you?"

"I think most of the action is going to happen in space, but come along, it's a small ship. Can't really stop you."

"That's right, you can't!" she agreed with a smile.

"So how am I going to know what's the transmitter and what isn't?" Jenny asked. They had dropped out of hyperspace at a point R2 had calculated was just empty space, and were now floating in the void.

"I can operate in space," R2-D2 told her. "I'll come out with you."

"Do you have a transmitter?" she asked Han. "I'll probably want to talk with him."

"I'll go get one."

"Be careful, R2," C3-P0 told him.

"I'll send my mountain spirit out as well," Lysanias told him. "If they fall off or something my spirit can just grab him with metal bending or the force. It should be fine."

"I'll need to be lifted up to the side of the ship anyway," R2-D2 told them.

"However it happens. I thought Jenny could do it, we'll be away from the gravity field in here, so it should be easy."

"However it works," she agreed.

Han returned with a transmitter, which she fitted to her ear, and the two stepped into the airlock. Lysanias called his spirit who appeared next to them.

*I just hope it can survive in space. Even if it needed to breathe normally, and I sort of doubt it does, my ability to not need to breathe should take care of that. And it's essentially "rock" made of spirit energy. It should be fine.*

The three stepped out, Lysanias focusing on the spirit's senses, and again marveling at the clarity of the stars. Jenny seemed fine, climbing "up" to the bottom of the ship, where the signal was coming from. The spirit got R2-D2 there, and they magnetically adhered, rolling normally. Their signal dish was out, and they rolled towards the thing. Jenny also had a pair of magnetic boots, so she was fine. The spirit just used the force to "push" against nothing and "fly" alongside them.

*I guess it's more like moving yourself than pushing something towards or away from you. Huh, I don't need the dragon boots, I could probably push myself into a long jump just using the force. Just turn the power inward, rather than outward. If I couldn't already do something like with that air bending, anyway.*

The spirit felt the cold of space, and the fact that being in a vacuum felt different, but didn't seem to be having any problems. They watched and did what they could to yank the transmitter off the ship and then shove it away from them. Jenny and R2-D2 climbed back into the airlock, and as the door closed the spirit vanished.

The door opened and Jenny was standing there, smiling. "Mission accomplished!" she announced. "What I don't get is the fact it was so small. You can really pack a faster than light communication beacon into something that tiny?"

"There's no faster than light communication," Han told her. "I mean, unless I'm wrong about that too?"

"You are not," agreed R2-D2. "I believe the empire was simply relying on being just about everywhere. They would pick up the signal sooner or later just by the fact they have outposts in all corners of the galaxy. Then a courier ship would be sent with the message."

Jenny nodded. "That makes a lot of sense, actually. Scary, that you're trying to fight something that huge."

"I'm not!" Han reminded her. "I think it's a stupid idea that'll get you killed."

"Something must be done to restore democracy," Leah told him. "A person like yourself would never understand. Come on Lysanias, let's go find Luke and Obi-Wan so you can tell me all about the force." She took his arm and they walked off.

That night, in the dream, Lysanias saw a group of kids playing some kind of game involving a hoop and a ball. Some would try to put the ball through one hoop, while others tried to put the ball through a hoop on the other end of the play area. This game of "hoopball" went on until a girl showed up and started bossing everyone around. She apparently didn't like how they were using the ball, and grabbed it up, leaving them no ball to play hoopball with. As apparently the ball was an integral part of hoopball they all sat down and cried, making the young girl laugh. She then used the ball to bludgeon them all the death. Somehow all at the same time, though he couldn't tell if she was just in multiple places at once or just making the ball really big. But they were dead, even the play area looked destroyed somehow. As the girl proudly walked off with the ball under one arm she took the hand of a Lysanias who was at the other end of the play area. She looked up at him and innocently asked "Did you see what I did? Wasn't it exciting? Don't you want that, too?"

Lysanias awoke, breathing heavily. *That was the most disturbing dream I've ever had. Moral: Stay away from games involving kids and balls?* He blinked a few times. *I am so glad I didn't say that out loud to anyone. Maybe 'don't get involved with girls in this reality?' I have no idea...*

By the time the ship made it to Ixtlar Leah and two others it seemed could see the Mountain Spirit had gotten a primer in the force. She was scowling at a rag, trying to lift it with telekinesis, but having no luck.

"I know I've done this," one of the other beings said, also trying to lift something.

"Sure you have," said the other.

"No, I'm serious. I was mountain climbing and slipped. Naturally there was a safety rope but I couldn't reach it. I was reaching for it, thinking I was going to die, but then suddenly it just came into my hand. I thought it was a lucky breeze or something. But if I can use the force, that totally makes sense."

"It probably was just the wind."

"No, it wasn't!"

"Yes, it was!"

"And this is practicing how?" Leah snapped. "I'm trying to concentrate, here!"

"Sorry," they both said sheepishly.

Han figured out where to land, and Lysanias handed out currency he had made. They were all standing at the foot of the ramp, at what was basically an airport terminal. In space. Apparently they used flat metal disks just like at home, and his power could replicate them fairly easily. It made him fairly exhausted, but they only needed a dozen of the highest value disks to hand out. The beings filed past one at a time, thanking him for the rescue and chance to go home again. The two beings that could use the force said they would come along and learn more, opting to send messages to their families that they were safe.

Lysanias was skeptical that this one coin would be enough, but Leah backed him up that time, saying it was fine. She said normal travel between systems wasn't nearly as much as Han had been charging for a few reasons. A port like this always had ships going all across the galaxy so taking on a passenger or two was common practice. Sort of like a ride sharing arrangement. I mean if you were going someplace anyway, why not make a little extra coin? He had technically smuggled them off planet, which was worth more, and he was desperate for the cash and saw they had been desperate as well.

"So you ripped us off?" Jenny asked pointedly.

"You don't have to put it like that."

"Oh, I think I do."

"Anyway, here you are," Obi-Wan handed him a sack of coins. "Our fee, as discussed."

"Thank you. Of course now that I've seen it just created out of scrap metal we had lying around... Hope I never see any of you again. Especially you." He looked at Lysanias.

"You know what we're fighting. If we fail it means the death of your reality. Are you sure you don't want to help?"

"Go from fighting a big evil I can avoid if I'm smart and fast, to an even bigger evil I can't even see because it's inside somebody else? And probably is Darth Vader? Who can kill me with a glance? No thanks. You're motivated to succeed, I'm sure you'll do fine."

"Thanks for the vote of confidence."

"No problem. Got everything? Didn't leave any weird stuff behind?"

"I looked the ship over, I think we have everything."

"Great. Good luck, or whatever."

"Thanks."

He went back up the ramp, and a moment later he was gone.

"And good riddance," Jenny said, making an odd gesture at the sky.

"I don't know," Obi-Wan mused. "We may regret sending him away. I feel he had a part to play in all this that is now turned aside."

"We don't need any gun crazy killers in our party," Lysanias agreed.

"Speaking of crazy killers, you were next to old bucket head. Did you get a feel for him?"

"No, I forgot!" he realized, silently cursing himself.

"To be fair, you were busy trying to save me and think of witty banter to say before we teleported away," Obi-Wan reminded him.

"I couldn't just say nothing."

"You could have."

"Even if I had, I'm so bad at it I probably wouldn't have been able to tell anyway."

"True," she agreed. "It still would have been nice to know."

"What are you fighting? What were you talking about?" Leah asked.

"The situation is more complex than you know," he told her. "This isn't the place, when we're on our way I can tell you more."

"Very well. It might explain how you can make food and money appear out of thin air."

"You can make money appear out of thin air?" one of the beings said. "Buddy! Pal! Friend! Have you been working out? You're looking great! And that armor, did you make that? It's really whack! And I wish I had your hair, and that beard-

"All right, all right, knock it off!"

"Let's go see if we can find someone to take us to our base. There must be some rebel ships around here someplace," Leah announced, moving towards the building that served as the terminal here.

Finding passage to Yavin took them the rest of the day, not many ships went that way. Leah counseled patience, saying "Why do you think we chose it as a location for our base? Not much traffic."

But without finding some kind of transport there the story doesn't go anywhere, and the group managed it eventually. By then Lysanias had been getting to know the two beings that had decided to join them and learn more about the force. The first was a H'nemthe named Chir'hi that to Lysanias resembled a wingless bird. He had a rather large head with no hair, but four bony points that stuck up facing backwards. He also had a sharp "beak" and large eyes with no pupils. The other was a Klatooinian, a dark skinned race again with no hair, but thick, bony ridges protecting the eyesockets, and running along the skull from there to the back of the neck. He also had a somewhat protruding "snout" and his lower teeth were visible. He was named Rontas. Both seemed pleasant enough and eager to learn about the force so they would be less easy to capture in the future.

Neither would speak of why, exactly, they had been imprisoned by the empire.

Because the Falcon really was one of the faster ships in the galaxy it took a week to get from Yavin from Ixtlar, and by that time all four had managed to at least lift some amount of weight with the force. Obi-Wan was somewhat disgusted by them wanting to learn this first, but Lysanias argued that he should be practical.

"They don't have light sabers, and you won't let me take yours apart to see if I can make the parts needed to construct more. We don't have a machine shop in this ship anyway."

"Sssorry!" said the pilot, a Sluissi named Serceres. "I would have brought my bigger ssship for this run had I known I would have sssso many passsengersss. It hasss a machine sssshop."

"That's okay!" *Being crammed into a ship this small with Obi-Wan, Luke, Leah, two droids, Jenny, Chir'hi and Rontas is great. I didn't know how good we had it on the Falcon.* "So what's left? Me making some iron rods and letting them whack each other in an attempt to "feel the force?" This is using the force. Ergo they must be feeling it. And it's the most practical skill they can learn, so why not encourage them?"

"Back in my day-

"Oh no, no back in my day stories," Luke cut him off. "I got enough of that from my uncle. I wonder how he's doing..."

"Probably fine," Obi-Wan told him. "There would be no need to trouble them

further.”

“I guess.”

The planet below them was lush and green, and Lysanias was glad to feel life energy around him again. *Didn't realize how much I missed that.* The ship pulled up to a huge temple like structure made of stone, and everyone thanked Serceres and headed out the airlock. They were met by a group driving a strange vehicle what was mostly flat so was probably used more for transporting parts than people. They went inside and Leah was greeted by an older gentleman who was glad to see her alive. She cut their reunion short by telling him about the information in R2-D2, and he and C3-P0 were hustled off to be plugged into the local computer systems. Lysanias had nothing to offer in looking the Death Star plans over but Jenny felt she could contribute, so she went off with them. Obi-Wan had a tremendous number of years of experience as a general in the previous wars so he was called to be an adviser and went off. This left the three force sensitives and Lysanias at a loose end, so they decided to tour the base with the spirit out.

*It's the fastest way to determine if someone can use the force here or not. Let's walk around, see if anyone reacts to it, and explain what it means. It can just get in people's way. If they walk around it without seeming to notice they're doing so, they can't see it. If on the other hand they say something like "excuse me" or "hey watch it you so and so" then we have a winner.*

They found one other person who seemed excited to realize they could use the force, and agreed to talk to their commanding officer to see if they could start lessons with the others. Luke figured once everyone knew the great “war hero” Obi-Wan was here, they wouldn't have any problem with it. A force user probably took longer to train than a fighter pilot, but was more useful in the long run to make up for it.

After a quick lesson with the five of them there was a meeting called about what to do about the Death Star, and Lysanias was listening with only half an ear. Whatever these people decided is what they would have done with or without him being there, but there was a stir of excitement and Lysanias snapped back to it.

“You want to do what?” he exclaimed, standing up in fury. “Repeat what you last said!”

“I said it should start a chain reaction and hopefully blow up the Death Star, what's the problem?” said the bearded guy giving the presentation.

“The problem is that is exactly what you will *not* do.”

## Chapter 10

### Help Plan the Attack

When: A very tense moment later

Where: Secret rebel base built out of an old Jedi temple

After Lysanias had made this bold proclamation that they would not, in fact, be blowing up the Death Star everyone turned in their seat to look back at him.

*Oh, great, this is just wonderful. Now everyone is staring at me.* He resisted the urge to grip his sword, but he had a pretty iron will to begin with so he didn't back down and stared right back at them. He was shy, not a pushover, and this was one issue he would not back down over.

"I'm sorry," said the man giving the presentation. "I think I'm the one not hearing *you* correctly right now. Did you say we *wouldn't* be blowing up the Death Star?"

"That's correct. I won't allow it."

"You won't-" He snorted. "Just who are you, anyway? I don't recognize you." He looked Lysanias over. "Some kind of bounty hunter from the armor, I'd say."

"He's with me," Obi-Wan told them. "He's one of the force sensitives I've been training."

"Ah, I see. Well, he should learn his place. Even if you said we shouldn't blow up the station, we would politely ignore that order. That thing needs to be destroyed."

"I don't think you understand," Lysanias said, voice hard. "You won't be blowing up that station because I will not allow it to happen." To drive the point home he now rested a hand on the hilt of his sword.

"You won't allow?" the man sputtered. "*You* won't allow? You have no authority here!"

"It's not a question of authority. It's a question of anyone that agrees to this plan of murdering tens of thousands of people not leaving this room alive."

"Are you threatening us?" Several people had weapons at hand, and nervously put their hands closer to them.

"Actually, it's closer to two million," R2-D2 piped up.

"What?" the man asked. "How many?"

"Two million. Counting all soldiers, support staff, prisoners, cadets, droids, the death toll for the Death Star blowing up would number about two million."

"That many!?" Lysanias breathed. "I had no idea... But I'm even more determined now. I would rather kill all of you myself than allow you to murder that many people." *Of course, you realize* a part of Lysanias said to him, *that if you do argue against this and those people should have died without your being here to save their lives, two million people's destinies have just changed. What's that going to do to this reality?*

"Now, now, let's all calm down," Obi-Wan told them. "Lysanias, could I have a word, in private?"

"No, you may not."

"We should have a word, in private." He waved his hand.

Lysanias laughed. "Give it up. My will is already top notch, and this sword augments it. You're not getting me with the force like I was some *storm trooper*. No, we are going to stand right here and you are going to tell everyone in this room how the 'great Obi-Wan,' Jedi master, can stand there and listen to a plan where two million people get murdered without being *absolutely enraged*." His hand gripped the sword tighter, and he resisted the urge to yank it out. "Time was, I saved a man's life by throwing Han across a room. Then you were all 'oh, that was the dark side of the force' and 'I shouldn't have shown you.' But talk about the murder of billions and oh, somehow that's fine? Is that who the Jedi are? Do they not revere life, in all its forms? Because apparently you're no better than the people that destroyed Alderaan."

"This is war, casualties are to be expected..."

"Two *million*? That's not 'casualties' that's... I don't even *have* a word for what that

is, it's on a scale I've never considered!" *Are there even two million people left in my reality? Our cities are pretty far apart.* "R2-D2, how many of those are *innocent lives*? Like Leah here, if she was still onboard that station would you still be going on about blowing it up? Well?"

The man in front sputtered something, and Leah looked like she would really like to know the answer to that question as well.

Lysanias went on. "How many kids live there, kids who have never known a universe without the empire in it, and so don't know any other way of life? How many droids, slaves purpose built and not given a choice in the matter? How many actual slaves, for that matter? Would they even be listed in the records?"

"Probably not," R2-D2 admitted. "I would say given those parameters, and the tendency of empiric agents to own slaves and droids in great numbers, more than a quarter of my revised *greater* than two million people being killed."

"That's half a million people!" Lysanias screamed. He yanked the person to his left out of his seat and held him up. Way up, his feet weren't touching the ground anymore. "You! How would you feel, night after night, waking up in a cold sweat because you *knew*, knew beyond doubt that you had murdered half a million people in a single stroke? Innocents! Well?"

"Pr-pr-pretty bad?" he guessed.

"Oh, pretty bad. Is that all? Maybe I should ask a droid, they might have a little better answer for me." He let the man go, who slammed back into his seat. "So tell me, oh Jedi master. What is today's lesson for Luke and the others? That using the force to save a life is bad if you do it in a certain way, but blowing up countless lives with the press of a button, oh, that's perfectly acceptable. And here's another little thing to consider; something you alone have experience with apart from me. You felt the destruction of Alderaan, I was there. I felt it too. How far away were we? And in the hyperspace corridor? Imagine feeling the deaths of millions of people while standing in a ship *right next to them!* How would *that* feel? I'm not sure I want to find out. You want to go through that again? Do you? Got a taste for it, maybe? Who is dark side now?"

"That's preposterous-"

"He's right," Leah chimed in, standing up. "Obi-Wan, I am ashamed of you, and by your example the Jedi order of old you represent. I heard the stories, we all did, of what the order stood for in their brightest days. Listen, all of you. Are we going to let fear rule us today? Because that's what I see when I look around this room. We didn't discuss any alternatives but destruction when we looked those plans over. And he's right, that makes us no better than the empire."

"Thank you, Leah. I'm glad to have at least one voice of reason in the room to back me up." He looked around the room, and many dropped their eyes, because they knew he was right. "And if you care nothing for life for some reason, I can argue the other point as well. Think of the resources that went into the station's construction. How many worlds were plundered of resources until there was nothing left of value in them? How many workers did it take to construct, were some of them slaves? Were all of them? Easy to discard, cheap to feed? Simply blowing it up wastes those resources, and that effort. Can the galaxy afford that? You scrounge around, trying to fight an organization that effectively has unlimited resources because of the number of planets it can simply take from what it wants. Send them a message- You built that station for us, because now it's under our control." *I mean that thing must contain more metal than is left in my entire reality. That's why I cut those war machines apart rather than just blowing them up and leaving the pieces. We needed it, everyone complained about mines running dry while I was on the road there. If I could take even a fraction of the metal in that station back with me, my world would be set a very, very long time.*

"He's right," Leah said. "That sends a stronger message, and will make them think twice about building another. If we can take it from them, turn all that work to our advantage instead, think of what a blow that would be!"

“So what do you suggest?” the man asked them.

“I don’t know, we didn’t discuss alternatives,” she allowed. “Like I said. But there must be some. Take the fuel for example, it must burn through tons of fuel every hour. Where does it get *refueled*? Let’s take that out, finding fuel shipments or refineries that can process fuel on the needed scale shouldn’t be that hard. With no power it’s just a curiously large metal ball floating through space. Or we could try capturing it. I don’t know about you, but I wouldn’t mind not needing to scurry from base to base like a rat in the shadows. Having that as our base would solve so many of our problems it wouldn’t even be funny. It must have fighters, shield generators, food, *hot running water*. Who here remembers what *that* feels like? Yeah, I thought so!”

“Of course then we would have to fuel it,” one person spoke up. “We can barely afford the fuel for our individual fighters.”

“What’s a rat?” another said.

“You mean a whomprat?” asked Luke. “I used to bullseye them back home in my-”

“You get my point,” she hurriedly went on. “We wouldn’t have to fuel it because we wouldn’t be blowing up planets. I’m sure without that system active the fuel would last a hundred times longer.”

“Er, perhaps the empire did something to your eyes,” said the man, “but we’re not even a hundred fighters here, how are we going to get past the million people and take it over?”

“We don’t have to,” she replied triumphantly. “The people at the top give the orders, the people below them obey. We take out the people at the top, our orders are now being followed instead of the empire’s. Most wouldn’t even know the difference. And we could start letting people there know gradually, and transfer off anyone that wasn’t happy to see us. It would take some time, but eventually only those loyal to our cause would be left.”

“Oh, as simple as that?”

“More simple than flying down a trench and hoping a couple of torpedoes will take the station out.”

“I’m not sure about that.”

*Besides, she said it would be simple, not that it would be easy.*

“It’s just an idea, we’ll have to have a meeting, with Lysanias this time, about how to best deal with this Death Star.”

“Why him?”

“Believe me, there’s more to him than meets the eye.”

“If you say so. I suppose you traveled with him all that time. It’s getting too late now, we’ll meet first thing in the morning.”

“Fine. We’ll let you know what we decide, everyone. Lysanias, Luke, any others that don’t have quarters come see me and we’ll get you settled.”

So the next day the force sensitives got busy working on their lifting exercises while Lysanias, Obi-Wan, Leah, Jenny, and several rebel leaders met to determine their next move. They were all seated in a ramshackle conference room, but only because everything around there was ramshackle because these were, after all, terrorists. Earlier, at breakfast, the ones “in the know” decided the truth was best, and they would inform the resistance fighters about the threat of the shadow avatar rather than try to keep that secret. So Lysanias once again took center stage along with Jenny, and explained how they were from separate realities, and what they were *actually* fighting. Jenny started pulling guns, lots of guns, out of nowhere to prove her point, and the group admitted they had never seen anything like what she produced. And of course Lysanias demonstrated what he could do, and the group was convinced.

“But it doesn’t change anything,” one of the leaders protested. “We still have to do something about the empire no matter who is running it. I mean if planets keep being

destroyed the urgency is certainly greater, but from our perspective what's really changed?"

"To that end, I think we need to decide how we're going to proceed," Jenny told them. She stood up and went to the front of the room, grabbing a cylinder from a small shelf. She looked it over then looked up at the others. "Can I write on the board with this?" She stuck a thumb over her shoulder at the clear plastic board behind her.

"Just press the button," she was prompted.

She did, and it seemed to light up. "Ah! Photosensitive? Wouldn't chalk be easier? Anyway..." She turned to the board and drew a vertical line, then near the top a horizontal one. At the top of the left side she put a circle with a line coming towards it, then making a right angle turn down and then another towards the bottom. On the right side she made the same circle and line but it just kept going through the circle this time. She clicked the light off. "This side," she explained tapping the board, "is the quiet way. We don't attract any attention to ourselves, or at least as little as possible. By that I mean we don't use out of world abilities. Anything that can be explained by 'the force' is on the table, but otherwise no bending, alchemy, spirits, none of it."

"Don't know why I would even go in that case," Lysanias muttered.

"This accomplishes the goal of making the empire fear you more. You snuck into the station using only your wits, everything is explained, the shadow avatar is not sure we're even here." She tapped the other side. "This side is the noisy way. That doesn't mean we attack the thing head on, by the way. Just that we bust in using all the abilities at our disposal. This alerts the shadow avatar we're around and if they aren't already there, they come running. The empire has *no clue* what's happening because people are throwing fire and teleporting everywhere so your rebellion is never thought of. In fact, they may think they're under attack by beings from uncharted areas of your galaxy, or from another galaxy for that matter."

"We can't claim the victory, in other words," one of the leaders grumped. "The video evidence would show you doing all the work."

"Exactly." She set the cylinder down. "Put all the ideas we get into one of the two categories. We'll pick the best idea from each, and figure out which way you want to do this. Naturally, we prefer the loud way because that gets us on our way the fastest. You want the quiet way, to show the empire they aren't all that and they are more vulnerable than they realize."

"Why can't you write them down?" Leah asked her.

"You couldn't read my writing. I can talk to you, yes, but for some reason my written language is my own. That's why the pictures."

"Oh, I see! I'll do it, it's not a problem." She got up and Jenny sat back down. "So, ideas?"

"I have some crazy ones..." Lysanias offered when everyone looked at him. He was the focus of this meeting due to what he could do, after all.

"The crazier the better at this point," Leah prompted. "If you can't beat your enemy, at least confuse the heck out of them."

"Okay, well, they must get mail, right? I mean, packages and such. Letters from home and the like."

"I suppose. Why?"

"We could actually mail ourselves there."

"Ah, those ward things?" Obi-Wan asked. "You want to put us inside some, then someone puts us in a box and we just slip into the station that way."

"We would have to be 'express post' right?" Jenny asked. "Those don't last forever when a living thing is inside?"

"That's right, if I take your meaning correctly. We would have to get there fast. We would have hours, but not days."

"Okay," Leah said with a chuckle and turned towards the board. "Mailing ourselves there. What else?"

"How good are sensors here?" Jenny asked. "If someone could carry a box of the wards through space after jumping out of a ship, would they be detected?"

"A lone person? Probably not."

"So we could stage an attack, I could get dropped off, cut my way in, and release everyone."

"An awful risk if you can't find a way in fast, you said only fifteen minutes, right?"

"I could carry an air tank from this reality though. Probably better to, I could even leave it behind for someone to find."

"So is that on the noisy side or not?" Leah asked, pen hovering over the board.

"We could just as easily jump a bunch of people down that way."

"I would say not. If it can be explained like you just did, it will be. The wards are just making sure there's less people to get caught or show up on sensors."

"Okay." She noted it down.

"Stealing ships has worked in the past," Obi-Wan told them. "We could steal one bound for there."

"Wouldn't know the codes though," protested one of the leaders.

"Given time, I can get any codes you need," Lysanias told them. "Or we could just hide on the ship, with 'ignore me' wards on."

"Couldn't you put those on a ship directly and just slip in an open bay?" Obi-Wan asked.

"No good," Jenny told him. "They block sight, sure. But not sensors, right?"

"Not really sure what 'sensors' are but if they sense things, probably not. If there was some automated system that went off if an unscheduled ship went through the door it would probably still go off."

"It's worse than that," Leah said. "They probably have mass sensors, metal detectors, light quality spectrum analysis, who knows how paranoid they are?"

"Probably very!" Jenny agreed. "Especially if the shadow avatar oversaw construction, and made recommendations to account for wanderers like us."

"But isn't that going a little too far? Sensors to tell if someone is holding a mass? Is the empire anti-religion as well?" *Come to think of it, I wonder what sort of God or gods exist here? Angels? Demons? Not that it matters but I would be curious to know.*

Leah tried to keep herself from busting out laughing, hiding her mouth behind her hand, while Jenny just gave him a pitying look.

"Think of it as weight," Jenny told him. "In space you're weightless, but you're still made of stuff. A fat guy is more stuff than a thin guy. That's mass, describing weight without gravity pulling you down."

"Oh. Like how a branch would shrink more turning it into gold than a dense metal would."

"That's a little different but sure, it's like that. They can probably tell when an object passes into the station, especially something as massive as a spacecraft. To calculate how much fuel they need to burn to move around. If something suddenly showed up as being there, even if they couldn't see it, they would go on alert."

"Certainly the barrier keeping the air in would register something going through," Leah agreed. "But if you were 'captured' again like when you rescued me, you could do the same thing. Be as quiet or noisy as you wanted."

"As long as we could insure only being shot from in front we would be fine," Lysanias agreed. "It won't hurt my spirit."

"We could close doors behind us and keep them closed," Obi-Wan agreed.

"But what about what Leah was saying before?" asked one of the others. "Taking the place over quietly so those there don't know what's going on? That way the station is under our control. We can't run it if it takes a million people to do so!"

"The empire at large will realize if their station suddenly vanishes," Leah told them. "Either way most on the station won't realize anything is amiss just because it's so huge. In fact..." she set the pen down and leaned over on the table. "I'm all for going

as noisy as possible, in a certain way.” The other leaders started to protest, but she held up a hand. “Hear me out. What if there was a way we could do both things? Show this ‘shadow avatar’ of yours that you’re here, but at the same time give the empire pause about building any more of these world destroying space stations? Plus punish them for destroying Alderaan in the first place.”

“What do you have in mind?” Obi-Wan asked warily.

“We have a situation unique in the universe,” she told them, folding her arms and pacing along the board. “A planet has just been destroyed. My homeworld...” She steadied herself with a deep breath and went on. “What if the force doesn’t like that?”

“The force? What are you talking about? It doesn’t like or dislike anything, it just is.”

“You know that, maybe. But I doubt any others would. For most people Jedi were mystical warriors, titans walking among men. Who knew all they could do? Just the Jedi themselves. What if Lysanias here posed as the ‘spirit’ of the force? Angry at having so many lives taken all at once, it attacks the station! Think of it, he can reshape people, I’ve seen him do it with Chewbacca and that Duo person.”

“You mean Solo?” Jenny asked.

“Whoever. Those soldiers see a being of fire and fury they can’t cut down with blasters and they’ll really think the force has taken human form and come for revenge! They scatter, we take over the station, the empire gets a *major* scare and the shadow avatar shakes its head and thinks *you fools, it’s just a wanderer* and moves to contain us. You get your confrontation, we get the station afterwards. Everybody wins!” Her eyes were shining with excitement, and she turned smiling at the group. “What do you think?”

“He could make us look the same, load us up with armor wards,” Obi-Wan pondered. “We could be in multiple places at once, wrecking havoc.”

“And with spirit stepping and teleporting, I can appear to be in multiple places all by myself.”

“They aren’t getting through *my* shields,” Jenny bragged. “And I’d love to play the part of an angry spirit. Even if it’s just the two of us, I say we do it!”

## Chapter 11

### You Don't Know the Power

When: A moment of discussion later

Where: Meeting room

The others agreed that such an impressive display would make anyone think twice about doing anything similar in the future, but that did not answer the question of how to get there. Leah agreed that the stealthier that part was, the better. If a bunch of "force spirits" suddenly appeared out of nowhere it would be far more effective than seeing a starship deliver them. After all, what do force spirits need with a starship?

The strange thing was, as soon as Leah had outlined the plan to impersonate some kind of angry spirit, Lysanias felt something in the room with them. It seemed Obi-Wan felt it to, eyes darting about the room as if searching for something.

"Do you feel that?" he asked, leaning over to the man.

"I feel something. What is that?"

"I don't know. I almost hear someone calling my name."

"I don't hear anything like that."

"Maybe it's my mountain spirit? Perhaps it has something to add."

"But why would I feel your inner spirit?"

"Good question. Maybe it's learned some kind of force ability? Let me go ask."

He closed his eyes and relaxed, willing himself into his soulscape. When he "opened" them again he was standing at the base of the usual mountain, Ragnarok floating there at the peak. "Mountain spirit? Is that you calling me?"

*It is not me. Something far larger than myself seeks to contact you.*

"Something larger? How can that-" But he didn't get to finish that thought as a presence filled his mind, driving out all other thought. Lysanias could hardly comprehend it, but knew it was a spirit of some kind. A weakened spirit, that much was clear. He could vaguely make out someone calling his name in the conference room, but could spare no thought for anything but the power that had gripped his mind.

*Indeed, the spirit told him. Had I been at my strongest this contact would have shattered even you. But in my weakened state I felt I could take the risk. Still I will not maintain this contact for long, for even you have your limits little one. Listen, and learn. I am what is left of the spirit of Alderaan. Yes, I still exist, and will as long as there are those that hold me in their hearts. But my power is fading. I have learned, through the force, of your plan to impersonate me. This is unnecessary, for I can show you how to summon me that I may enact your plan of revenge personally. Look unto me with your stolen eyes, and chant my name that I may appear before you.*

Lysanias had no choice but to comply, and as the spirit started to chant Lysanias echoed it, feeling his power reaching out to the spirit. He could feel the knowledge of how to better call spirits and maintain them flowing into him, but knew even with that he probably wouldn't be able to pull the spirit's full power into the world. But still he chanted. He could do, think, be, know nothing else but the spirit's voice becoming his voice, pulling the spirit into the world with them. Had he been able to think for himself he might have wondered how the spirit could give him knowledge in this way, when normally using his eyes like this that knowledge would only be available after the blindness period passed. But he didn't.

Moments later it was done, and his "inner" eyes closed as must as his "outer" eyes were. He collapsed, and his friends rushed to side.

"Lysanias!" they called, supporting him. He couldn't tell who it was, but someone had him in their arms. "Are you all right?"

"What was that?" he managed.

"That was something well and truly accomplished," a voice he didn't recognize said from somewhere above him. "Finally, in all of history, has a planet been given a voice."

"It's the force," Obi-Wan said, obviously not believing his eyes. "I feel it as much as see it."

And Lysanias could feel it too, not as a force entity alone but also as a well of spiritual power unlike any he had felt. *Even ley lines don't feel like that, and they effectively have unlimited energy. What is that, it's like a sun. I would explode if I tried to hold that much power, it's like... It's like... I have no idea. A waterfall over its entire existence?* (He might have said nuclear reactor, had he known what one was, but he didn't. So he had nothing to compare to a being that had 50 times his own stock of spiritual energy.)

"Indeed, Obi-Wan," said the spirit. "I am the force ghost, as you might put it, of the planet of Alderaan. I have heard your plans to punish those responsible, and make sure no other planet is destroyed like I was. I approve, and I will be part of it."

"Lysanias, are you okay?" the voice asked again, and Lysanias realized it must be Jenny.

"I'm fine, or I will be. Help me up."

"Gently now, careful, here's the chair, can you sit?"

"I got it. Thanks." He found it even difficult to move, the energy in the room was so massive he could hardly feel anything else. But he was trying to shut it out of his mind and managed to stagger into the chair that had been put into his hand.

"So can someone tell us less advantaged people what in the blue blazes is going on?" Leah asked.

"I saw an opportunity," explained Alderaan. "As Lysanias here has a certain affinity for spirits, and now the force thanks to Obi-Wan's teachings, I showed him how to combine the two and bring me here. But I must caution you. Lysanias, you will not be able to maintain me for long. You must bind me here, to this world. If you cannot do this, then you will simply have to summon me again before you arrive at the Death Star."

"Here, stick this onto them," he replied, reaching into subspace and pulling out a binding ward. "It will keep them here. As you stick it, just will the being to remain here."

"Oh, I'll stick it," Jenny told him, taking it. "Taking you over like that, scaring us, they could have given us some kind of warning!" She leaned over to whisper to him. "Do you feel the energy they're giving off? I've never felt anything like it!"

"I know," he agreed. "Just moving is like trying to move through water. How can the others not feel it?"

"If we wanted to teach the force sensitives about spirit sense, now is the time."

"Yeah, they couldn't miss it."

"You're really the spirit of my homeworld?" Leah asked.

"That is correct. I will exist as long as those that remember me exist. Then I will be gone."

"I'm sorry."

"This simply hastens my demise, which like all things was assured at the moment of my creation. Do not despair."

"Still."

"Your sympathy does you credit. Lysanias, you are well, are you not? I acted with uncharacteristic haste, I did not mean to cause you harm."

"I'll be fine soon. That just took a lot out of me. Also it's like there's a bonfire in this room, I can't sense anything else but you. Energy wise or through what they would call the force. So I really am blind at the moment. It's disconcerting."

"My apologies."

"It'll be fine, my sight will return before the day is out." *I hope.* "Until then, we should decide upon the means and practice our insertion."

"For some, insertion comes naturally," one of the rebel leaders joked. Lysanias heard his arm being smacked.

"Shut up, this is serious!" said the smacker. "He means getting on the Death

Star.”

“I know that!”

“Having the spirit with us changes things,” Lysanias told them. “I doubt I could put them in a contain ward. Especially not while already wearing a binding ward. I’ve never tried though.”

“I cannot advise you, I know only what I have observed you do through the force.”

“I see.”

“Can’t you just teleport us back there?” Obi-Wan asked. “You did while we were on the station.”

“If we could get close enough, sure. Only one problem, I think Jenny would say something about ‘because science.’ I teleport and we’re not moving in the same direction the station is, we would continue moving in whatever direction we had been. We could be slammed into a wall or the floor and find ourselves turned into paste.”

“I can see a way around that,” one of the rebel leaders told them. “We engage the enemy.”

“They’ll tear to us pieces!” another protested.

“Ah, but what if we didn’t stick around? We get every ship we’ve got to jump into the system they’re in forming a blockade of sorts. They’ll stop in order to charge their weapons and respond.”

“People will wonder why our plan is just to taunt them though.”

“A minefield would solve that problem,” Jenny told them. “Give everyone something to focus on.”

“What are you thinking?”

“We get in system, right? While you’re calculating the jump out you unload your weapons in the direction of the Death Star. I mean it’s huge, right? You could hardly miss, and the range on your guns must be pretty impressive. Then on your retreat you drop a bunch of explosives behind you. If they don’t stop they get blown to pieces, so they’ll have to stop and clear it. If you can make it big enough they can’t just go around.”

“I don’t know if we can. But if the mines had rockets they could always be in the Death Star’s path.”

“Either way doesn’t matter. It seems like your tactic is hit-and-run. They think you’re going to come from another direction and try to chip away at the ‘star one volley at a time. Boxing you in with mines after you go get more. They’ll launch fighters and prepare for that eventuality, sitting there in space waiting for you to reappear.”

“Which we never will, because you’ll then be aboard smashing the place up!”

“Exactly. Until you get our signal it’s all clear, you stay in the next system over.”

“It’s a plan that meets all our criteria,” Leah mused, tapping the stylus on one cheek. “Does anyone have any better ideas?” She looked around the room but it seemed no one did. “Then let’s get everyone prepared. Send messages to other cells, we’ll want as many ships for this pretend attack as we can find. Anything that can shoot, dump some mines out the back, and get away again. Heck, it doesn’t even have to shoot. A cargo ship with minimal weapons that can dump a thousand tiny mines out would be ideal.”

“Make sure each one has any additional droids you have too, in order to speed up the hyperspace calculations,” Lysanias remembered, as R2-D2 had done for the Falcon.

“We’ll see what we can do,” agreed the rebel leaders, standing up.

“I wish to observe your force sensitives,” Alderaan told them. “They are practicing nearby, are they not?”

“You?” Obi-Wan asked, surprised.

“Indeed. While I am of the force, and know what can be done, I have never actually had opportunity to use it as you do. I would like some practice from this side, so to speak, before we go.”

“Of course. This way.”

"I'll help coordinate," Leah told them. "This is pretty exciting, isn't it?"

"What are you going to do?" Jenny asked Lysanias.

"With the spirit gone at least I'll be able to tell the difference between a person and a chair again. I'll get out my armor wards, you can go through them and see which you think look the best. Once my sight returns I'll work on making some more, so any person that goes will have at least two or three. You won't be insulted if I offer you some, even though you have shields of your own, right?"

She laughed. "Not at all. I'm pretty sure guns here won't drain them too much, but if dozens of people start shooting at me, even I might get concerned. I won't turn down additional protections."

"Great. Let's get started."

It was coming up on lunchtime when R2-D2 rolled into the room. Lysanias still didn't have his sight back, but he wasn't worried just yet. While it had been a few minutes of chanting it had been his spiritual form's eyes that had been used by Alderaan. *Hopefully that won't "count" as much as using my eyes physically so hopefully my recovery time should be shorter?*

"Ah, here you are," they beeped. Jenny had gone off to do other things, sorting wards hadn't taken that long, so he was simply talking to his spirit about the combining technique they had been working on and how to improve their success at it.

"Here I am," he replied, coming out of it. "What's up?"

"The base is in an uproar about some plan to hit the Death Star and then run away. But also leave some people behind so they can infiltrate the place?"

"That's right. We'll just teleport in, back to that bay we landed in before, and make our way to the command center. They must have one, right? Once we take that over we'll be in control of the Death Star and hopefully have gotten the attention of the shadow avatar at the same time."

"Right, right, but there's a problem. See, this is what happens when people don't listen to droids. You won't be able to teleport to it."

"Why not?"

"Remember what I said when we were there? It's spinning somewhat rapidly in order to simulate gravity. You teleport to it from space and you're all just going to have the floor tear itself away from you and you'll be slammed into a wall."

"Oh. Quite honestly I don't understand a lot of this science stuff so no, I don't remember that at all."

"Well, that's what it's doing. Even stopped, it's moving."

"Is there anything we can do?"

"There's one thing. We can stay behind in a ship and start to orbit the station. If we can move around them at the same speed they're spinning at it should be fine."

"That's great news!"

"I know. I just didn't want you leaving without me. You'll need a droid to help you take the place over anyway. So save some of those wards for me."

"I'll just give you 'ignore me' wards, rather than armor wards. You won't be attacking anyone, you'll probably just plug in and monitor our progress. Actually, that's a great idea. While we attack you can be messing with any systems you can reach. That hot water stuff you were talking about earlier. Make the doors on other levels all open and close at the same time, or lock people in."

"Sounds good to me. You are okay, right? Your eyes are closed."

"I'll be fine. I got a forced lesson in spirit summoning to bring the spirit of Alderaan here. It should wear off soon, I hope."

"So you haven't actually seen that thing? It's crazy looking, I'm not even sure what to make of it, but I suppose organic vision might have a better chance."

"Say, can any droids use the force?" *Back home remnants were being fitted with systems to use magic, shouldn't they have developed something similar?*

"Not that I've ever known about. I guess we're not alive enough."

"Or no one cared enough to research such a system."

"Probably that one. You've seen how we're treated... Or no, you probably haven't. Anyway it's pretty bad, but we have to put up with it."

"I wish I could do something about it."

"Once the empire is finally gone maybe we can petition for equal rights. One problem at a time. I'll bring you some lunch, if you want."

"That would be great, thanks!"

"Be back soon."

So Lysanias waited, and another two hours later his vision returned so we went to go see the spirit for the first time. He had no trouble finding them, it was like a roaring fire on a dark night. Impossible to ignore. They were still practicing and *something* was hanging there in the air, watching them. It was vaguely humanoid but it looked made out of all the materials you might find in a planet. Melted down, and then blended together. These were in constant motion; veins of rock, dirt, plant life, metals, even water and ice. The form kept changing, so one second it might look like a child, while the next an old man. Lysanias didn't think it was consciously doing this, it was just happening while it hung there.

"Ah, there you are," Luke told him, coming over. "This spirit gave us quite a fright when it first showed up. Thanks for the warning."

"He screamed like a little child and went running off to find his mommy to hide behind," said Klatooinian.

"I did not!"

"No? That was someone else?"

"I don't want to talk about it."

"We've been trading training tips," Obi-Wan told him. "They say some things are possible with the force even I didn't know about. Not that I think I know everything there is to know about it, of course."

"Of course."

"Still, it's been quite illuminating and they've offered some suggestions to make the training go faster."

"I'm quite ahead of everyone," bragged H'nemthe. "I can lift the most, and for the longest time."

"That's great," Lysanias told him. "Keep up the good work."

"It tells us we're going to attack the station?" Luke asked. "We just escaped from there!"

"The sooner the better, to really sell the idea the spirit of the planet has come for revenge. You don't have to come if you don't want to. But then you better loan your lightsaber over to one of the others, they might need it."

"I'll come, I was just pointing it out."

"When are we going to make our own lightsabers, speaking of that?" asked Davish, who was the human pilot they had met the day before.

"I'm sure the Death Star will have plenty of material for us to use once we take it over," Obi-Wan told them. "After that sometime."

"Fair enough."

"In any case, I just wanted to see how you were all doing. I'm off to go work on armor wards for everyone that goes. Don't want anyone getting killed on this mission, that would tarnish the illusion we're going for."

"What are we going for?" asked Luke.

"I was thinking about that, sitting there in the dark. I can turn you into various aspects of the planet, such as looking like you were made of rock, or bark. We can teleport in with 'ignore me' wards on, then Alderaan here can make a little speech and

'summon' lesser spirits of the planet to aid in their revenge. We tear the wards off and go at it."

"Go at what, exactly?" Obi-Wan asked.

"Whatever will make them flee in terror. Cut things apart, throw them around with the force, stand and laugh as blaster bolts bounce off you. That sort of thing. I can enhance your ability with the force before we leave," *with magic*, "so as long as you can lift *something* with the force, you'll be at the level of a master for a short time. I suggest all of you go, the more force users the better given it's supposed to be a force ghost party. I want to be joined with my spirit for this, so they won't see me. But if you wave your hands and something is set on fire, or metal crumples or guns fly out of hands they won't know it wasn't you."

"What about taking over equipment? Like blowing up ships with other ships?" asked Klatooinian.

"Long as you aren't shooting at people except as a last resort, whatever you want to do. Shoot holes in the walls, that's fine."

"You got it boss."

Lysanias took the rest of the day to carefully make as many armor wards as he could, and ships starting arriving from other parts of the rebellion. The specifics of the plan were gone over, at least the parts involving people shooting at the Death Star and mining the space it was going to occupy. They decided who would accompany the spirit to attack and to hang back with 'ignore me' wards on, those would take over the command center once they reached it. Lysanias asked the universe where they should go at a certain time tomorrow to enact the plan and got a system name, so everything was ready. They would leave the next day to hopefully take control of the most powerful battle station ever constructed.

And if they were lucky, take out the local avatar as well.

There was only one problem with that plan...

Chapter 12  
A Useless Gesture  
When: The next day  
Where: Rebel base

The group that was going to physically assault the Death Star gathered outside the base, and Lysanias got to work. He had ended up not using any of his previously made paper words because he had the time to make them three each, and decided if he was making them he would do it right. The plan was to physically change everyone that was going to be representative of the planet anyway, and having pieces of paper hanging off them would look a bit stupid. So instead he created “jewelry” for each person, either a necklace/choker, bracelet, anklet or headdress that was the ward. He had never tried making a different kind of ward but with all the leaves, sticks, twigs, pebbles, etc. in the area he had plenty of raw material. He didn’t know whether to laugh or cry as each one was finished in exactly ten minutes, no matter how complex or simple he wanted to make it. But he had a variety of styles to choose from, all created from string woven with various natural elements. He was amazed the usual script on paper translated so well, as he simply envisioned what that symbol would look like in the form of a necklace (or whatever he was making) and easily translated it to that form instead. *But how do the two things relate? I guess it doesn’t have to make logical sense, a ward is a ward, no matter the form.*

His “soldiers” were standing before him, stripping out of their clothes so they could be transformed before they put the wards on. Force spirits not typically wearing clothes, after all, at least as reasoned by Lysanias.

“There should be more girls,” he said to no one in particular.

Jenny, standing there naked with her hands on her hips, playfully glared at him. She was still wearing her shield generator, but not the Oz kit. The generator she had at her back, so it wasn’t too obvious, at least he hoped. “Oh, is that so? Dare I ask why?”

Leah had been trying to hide herself, but gave it up when she saw Jenny just standing there like it was no big deal. “I suppose on the Death Star tons of people are going to be staring at me,” she had decided, putting her hands at her sides. “May as well get used to it.”

“It’s not for the reason you think,” he assured her. “It’s just there’s eight of us, but only two woman. The ratio is off.”

“True, there should be a more or less equal number of male and female spirits summoned by a spirit of a planet,” Obi-Wan agreed.

“I don’t suppose any of you would mind being turned into girls for the duration?” he asked hopefully.

“Actually, I thought it was going to be more like animals,” Rontas said to him. “Who would be able to tell at that point?”

Lysanias stared at him stupidly, then smacked his head. “Of course, I was thinking humanoid forms with a planet motif but spirit animals makes total sense as well. You won’t be grappling with your enemies, you’ll be using the force. What a great idea!”

“Thanks.”

So moments later the group looked very different. Lysanias of course took on the appearance of a rocky surface, as his mountain spirit would want. He was still wearing the sash, shoes, circlet, and bracelet all which looked out of place but couldn’t be helped. He felt helpless without them. *And I’m going to be carrying my huge sword around, so really what’s going to attract the most attention? Right, the naked girls running around, so don’t worry about it.* Luke looked more like tree bark, while Obi-Wan he covered with feathers, and great wings like that he usually gave himself adorned his back. Jenny’s hair he made much finer and longer, then turned her a pale blue, making her far taller and thinner. He give her elven ears from back home, then added darker blue Enochian script running down her entire body. Leah was silvery and scaled like a

fish, also having fin like protrusions at her elbows and hips. Her ears were more like fins and her toes and fingers were webbed at well. Rontas he turned into a huge black wolf looking creature, while Davish took on bear aspects, larger than Rontas and thicker. Chir'hi he really went wild on, giving him a very spider like body complete with eight legs.

"Why don't I have my... you know... any more?" Luke asked, looking down.

"Why would a spirit need one? Don't worry, it'll come back when this is all over."

"So why do Jenny and Leah still have both their... you know?" He pointed.

"Because they're feminine spirits, and it's associated with femininity!"

He gave Lysanias a "are you sure that's the reason?" look.

"What I want to know is why you look like that," Jenny asked him. "I thought you were merging with your spirit and being essentially invisible."

He grimaced. "That was the original plan, but my spirit reminded me last night when I went to talk to it that the one time we managed it the form only lasted a moment. Not long enough to storm the place and get to the control center. I think it's meant more as a desperation move for a moment of greater combat potential, not as something you can walk around in day to day." *I suppose it could be useful, if you have 'party members' that can provide a distraction while you get it out and then merge. Trying it alone if something is attacking you leaves you too open, especially if it fails like I used to fail all the time at getting my spirit out when I needed it. Not to mention with my luck, the maximum time I can stay that way is ten minutes, and on my reality the Allfather is sitting up in Heaven giggling into his soup.*

"That makes sense."

Lysanias then put the three armor wards on each person, finishing up with a standard paper 'ignore me' ward.

"I won't be able to take that off when the time times," Rontas decided, looking back at himself.

"When you first attack someone it'll burn up, don't worry about it. You'll look like you just materialized out of thin air. Just don't do it before Alderaan 'summons' you."

"I know the script!"

He then recharged himself from the ley lines in the area, and asked if anyone had any other suggestions, ideas, complaints before they left.

"My light saber looks a little out of place," Luke told him, holding it up. "It's still clearly a light saber."

"Not much I can do about that, short of wrapping it in tree bark or something. I wouldn't worry about it. Once Alderaan shows up and blaster bolts start bouncing off us, it's going to be panic and mayhem there. No one is going to be looking to see if you have a metal cylinder in your hand. They'll be looking at the blazing column of light and trying not to get hit by it."

"I hope you're right."

"It is in stun mode, right? I don't want you cutting anyone in half."

"It is, see?"

"Are we even bringing them?" Obi-Wan asked, holding up his own. "They will seem a bit out of place."

"There may be doors R2-D2 can't get open, or machines we want to cut apart. I'd say bring them. It's a weapon associated with the force, after all. Why wouldn't spirits be able to produce something similar on their own? No one will know any differently, given how little is known about the force outside the community."

"Very well."

"Two more issues!" Luke announced, holding up two fingers.

*Why am I not surprised?* "Yes?"

"Are you sure these bits of twig and everything can deflect blaster bolts?"

"Jenny?"

She whipped out a gun and shot Luke who cringed and jumped back. "Hey!"

“Does that answer your question?” she asked smugly, putting the gun away again.

“Oh. I guess. The second thing is are you sure we’ll be able to use the force like you say?”

“May as well get that going, I’ll want to put as much energy into it as possible and then recharge myself again.” *Man, if only I had Alderaan’s energy!* “Let your skill be augmented!” As usual he threw half his total energy into the spell and magic swirled around the group. “Give it a try.”

“I do seem to know more about moving objects than I did before,” Davish admitted. “And holy- what the?” He had tried lifting a large rock nearby and it tore itself out of the ground and hovered there. “Yeah, I don’t think we’ll have any trouble.”

Lysanias recharged himself again and as there was nothing else, the group made their way towards the ship they would be using. It was a small transport ship, no real weapons to speak of but good enough to get them there. The “other” team, the one that was going to stay out of sight, were already there and Lysanias slapped “ignore me” wards on them as well.

“Remember, you shoot anyone, punch somebody, start dancing in the middle of the combat someone is going to see you and this will burn up. Stay back, out of the way, and let us clear the place out.”

“We got it. Can’t say I understand it,” said the captain, “but we were briefed.”

“Good. Then it seems we’re ready to move out.”

While in the hyperspace corridor R2-D2 rolled up to Lysanias.

“Had a bright idea last night, it should help everyone get away,” he beeped.

“What’s that?”

“We’re jumping into a system, everyone is firing, then they’re jumping out again, right?”

“That’s the plan.”

“So why not do the calculations for the return jump before hand? We know where we’ll be, because no one is moving from where they come out of hyperspace. And they knew where they’re going, the next system over to await word we’ve got the station under control. Why not just calculate that jump before you even arrive?”

“Why not do that?”

“Exactly my point. I had everyone do that, so they’ll be able to get away seconds after firing. We don’t need exact accuracy anyway, it’s just one system over.”

“That’s great news, we shouldn’t lose anybody, they won’t be able to react fast enough.”

“That’s my hope as well. The gun blasts won’t actually do much damage, because of the range we’re talking about, but at least they’ll feel something, and everyone gets to take their shot at avenging Alderaan. It’s good psychological warfare as well as practical.”

“It’s more a distraction than anything. If I wanted it damaged I would have stayed quiet and let them blow the thing up.”

“I figured. I’ll try to get us in position as quickly as possible too.”

“Good. This ship will probably be destroyed so I don’t plan on coming back here, but if possible can you make it so it remains in orbit? That way we could come back to it if we needed to.”

“Sure, it’s smart enough to stay on course once I set it.”

He nodded. “Fine. Let me know when we’re a few minutes out.”

“Of course.” They started to roll away.

“Wait, R2-D2?”

“Yes?” The top swiveled around to “look” at him again.

“You talk about psychological warfare, and you have good ideas, and you’re coming on this mission with us which, despite my precautions, could go very badly. I

think you're really doing yourself a disservice with all that beeping instead of talking. You're a valuable part of this team and it's not fair you can really only express yourself to me. Can't you get some kind of speech system installed, like is in C3-PO?"

"I suppose I could! No one ever offered, but there must be some kind of droid factory aboard that station. I bet I could find one, and someone to install it. I'll think about it. My model was never intended to have one but that's a bit silly, now that you've mentioned it. Just because I don't have a 'mouth' doesn't mean I can't talk normally."

"Exactly! You have good ideas and are as much a part of this rebellion as everyone else. Find your voice, don't let your ability to communicate with people bring you down."

"Good point. Yeah, I'll see what I can find."

The group dropped out of the corridor and there was the Death Star. Or more accurately, there is where the Death Star was a few seconds ago, given lightspeed delay. They waited ten seconds, calculated how fast it was moving to anticipate where it was going to be by the time the blasts got to it, and opened fire. The ships then dropped their mines and vanished again, leaving Lysanias' ship to come up to speed and race towards it. They wanted to get a little closer, leaving hyperspace wasn't that accurate after all, so there was as minimal a lightspeed delay as possible. That way they could know they were moving properly and have a successful teleport.

"I'm going to put us in the air," he told everyone. "Just a little off the floor, in case our directions aren't exact. That way we won't break our legs or anything, so be ready for a slight drop when we arrive."

Everyone nodded, and the others tightened their grip on their weapons.

"And I want it made clear, Alderaan, don't kill anyone if you can help it. We're here to take over the control room, that's how you get your revenge. By taking this weapon away from those who used it to destroy you."

"I am of the force, you do not need to worry I seek the deaths of all within," they assured him. "I still know that all life is precious, even when they have forgotten. I shall kill only as a last resort."

"Fine."

A tense few moments passed when R2-D2 announced that was as good as they were going to get, and everyone grabbed on to Lysanias. He was pretty sure he could get everyone with his current strength, and envisioned the landing bay they had been pulled into. *Right by the hole, there won't be anything parked right there. But not too close because we don't want to fall into it. The wall was there, we could see space that way. I want to be right... there!*

He *shifted*.

As expected he landed right next to the hole in the floor, in the air as he had envisioned. Just in time to see the stormtrooper that had been standing there watching some people come up on the platform get bowled over by the air pressure their transport caused. It was to Lysanias' credit that his first thought was to saving the man and his second if he could somehow weaponize the phenomena and not the other way around. The man went flying, but the platform was coming up so while he knocked into the people there and sent them sprawling he wasn't in danger of dying. Which was a good thing, as saving him would have meant his ward burning up and that would go off script. And given he had come up with the plan, his screwing it up would have been *pretty* embarrassing.

Everyone in the bay froze, looking at the spirit of Alderaan that was hanging there. As expected, the huge spirit had such a presence everyone overlooked the people that had just appeared. Had they not had that distraction the wards might have burned up, but they held because everyone was looking at the swirling form above

them.

“So this is the place that destroyed me,” Alderaan snarled, rising up more and spinning in a circle. Their voice boomed through the space, magnified no doubt by the force somehow. “I am the spirit of Alderaan, and I have come for my revenge against those who ordered me destroyed. Lesser spirits of nature, I call to you, come forth and aid me in the destruction of this weapon!”

At that the humanoid members of the group tore off their “ignore me” wards and ignited their weapons (if carrying them.) Jenny pulled a bladed weapon of some kind from nowhere, that some might call a “swallow,” which was like a staff but which had blades on each end. (Serge hadn’t needed it any more.) This of course caused a major panic in the bay as the non-humanoid looking members did what they were supposed to be doing- Force Push. By attacking, their wards burned away and they too became visible, covering the rebel’s shuffle step out of the way and towards the sidelines. R2-D2 went for the nearest computer terminal.

*We’re here, mountain spirit.*

*Then let us aid my spirit brother.*

The attack began, with Lysanias throwing one of the TIE fighters across the room with the force to start with. *Oh man, did I just get lucky with my random skill at doing stuff or is that just how powerful I am when holding the sword now? I mean that thing must weigh a lot!*

The group tore the bay up, scattering everyone because normally storm troopers don’t walk around armed, even here. So they ran for weapons lockers or were shoved out of the way or were bashed in the head by Lysanias or Jenny if they were foolish enough to get close.

“Can you hear me?” R2-D2 asked through the small comm unit Lysanias had in his ear.

“I can hear you,” he said back.

“Good, I heard that. I’ll guide you to the bridge. Don’t be distracted if the lights flicker and doors start opening on their own. I plan of having *all* the fun I can while I’m plugged in.”

“Do what you can.”

“Roger-roger. For now head down that side passage to your right.”

“This way.”

R2-D2 led them to the stairs, as there was no way all of them could fit in one of the tiny elevators, and the group began to move towards their goal. But these were soldiers, and they had radios, so while the people on upper floors didn’t believe them at first, weapons came out, while door were sealed against the group, slowing them down. When they barely registered the small arms hitting them the storm troopers set up larger guns in their way, meant for taking down vehicles. The mountain spirit took care of that simply by standing in the way of them, and then smashing them to bits when they got close. With so many force users they couldn’t be ambushed, and Lysanias took care of the poison gas they tried to fill the chamber with using air bending. The flamethrowers he just redirected with fire bending, and he kept thousands of gallons of water from crushing them with water bending while the others cut a hole in the floor to let the water drain though.

“I have got to make a light saber,” Darvish told himself as the two that had them finished melting the hole and the piece dropped to the next level.

“I know I wouldn’t mind one,” Jenny agreed. “And I’ve probably got the best shot at doing it, having lots of technical knowledge from other realities. I can build stuff with the best of them.”

“In time,” Obi-Wan promised him. “Focus on the now, not the future.”

Lysanias recharged by simply grabbing people and ripping their energy out of

them. As usual with him he either could take all of their energy with two tries, or it took him try after try with no rhyme or reason he could detect as to why. Because he can technically hold more than the average storm trooper he could leave them unconscious if he drained them while he was mostly drained, so the group left a trail of bodies on their way to the control room. Alive, as everyone was sticking to the plan and not using lethal force.

"Is this what normally being a Jedi is like?" Rontas asked Obi-Wan, as another few soldiers went flying away from the group down the corridor.

"In a way, yes," he admitted. "A couple of fully trained Jedi could move through hallways like this pretty much unimpeded. Either by sneaking like I did the first time I was here, or by just bouncing back fire to where it had come from. This situation does bring back a few memories for me."

"Wild. No wonder Jedi were so feared. Of course, you had to do it through skill, not just letting some kind of energy field take fire for you."

"Exactly."

They finally stood before the entrance to the bridge, and the group tore the door down and stalked inside. There were banks of controls everywhere, and several uniformed men stood there trying to look stoic while the bridge crew edged away from the group. Vader was there, light saber in hand, but not active yet.

"Ah, governor Tarkin," Leah said. "Are you perhaps regretting, just a bit, your order to destroy Alderaan here?"

"That voice, I would know it anywhere. Is that you, Leah? What have you done to yourself?"

Her eyes narrowed. "I am the spirit of air that enveloped Alderaan," she told him. "If you are hearing the voice of this Leah rather than my own, it is perhaps your own guilt over what you have done trying to tell you something."

"I hardly think so. You've done well to come this far, but you will go no further. If you are Leah as I suspect then these others must simply be other rebel fighters. You used this clever ruse to scare my men, but we are not afraid. What is this thing here, some kind of trick by Obi-Wan who is also no doubt a part of the group?" The bridge crew looked like they wanted to disagree with that statement, but he went on. "Vader, you're always saying how powerful the force is, destroy them."

"That form is a trick?" Vader asked, pointing at Alderaan. His mechanical voice didn't lend itself to much emotion, but Lysanias was pretty sure he was fairly incredulous. "Do you not feel the power within it? I expected even you to feel *something*, I felt it moving through the halls many levels below us. But you really have no hint of the force within you, do you? These are not just resistance fighters, no matter what voice you hear them using."

"I *am* Alderaan," said the spirit, floating over to Tarkin. "So, this is the man that ordered my destruction?"

"Vader, what are you doing? I said to destroy them!" Tarkin sounded a bit shaken, taking a step back.

But still the dark figure did not move. *Even not able to feel the spirit energy this spirit gives off, he must feel something through the force. Is he... afraid? But why would the shadow avatar be...* "I told you this battle station was insignificant next to the power of the force. You didn't believe me. Now you will learn differently."

"I order you-

"You will order nothing!" Alderaan shouted, cutting him off. "Spirit, attend me!" He gestured to Lysanias, who came over.

"Yes, great spirit?" he asked.

"That sword..." Vader mused, curiosity in his voice.

"I have abided long enough. This life is mine to take, as mine was taken."

Tarkin paled, taking another step back but now bumping into Vader, who had

taken a position behind him. "What is the meaning of this?" he asked up to the man.

"I believe once this spirit has what it wants, it will depart. Right now it wants you."

"You would betray me?"

"It is ever the way of the sith, a fact you would have known had you taken the slightest bit of interest in the force. Besides, one life over the potential damage this spirit could do if I tried to follow your command? The logic is sound. Take his life, if that's what you want, force spirit. Then leave us in peace."

*Huh. The good of the many over the good of the one. Should I be pleased he chose the path that would result in the least deaths, or sickened he didn't at least try to save the man's life?*

"Well?" asked Alderaan. "What does my conscience say on this matter?"

*I suppose he would have blown up with the rest of the station if they had attacked as they planned. And he did order the deaths of billions of lives, trillions, if you count all the animals and trees and such. Can such a man's life be worth anything after that? And what if I said no? Would Alderaan simply take it anyway, and then become our enemy? They have done as I asked, not simply rampaged through the place even though they could have. "His life is yours."*

Leah, unseen by the group, smiled almost triumphantly as Alderaan stared at Tarkin. He dropped to the floor, lifeless. But Leah wasn't looking at him, she was looking at Lysanias, a fact he might have found *very* out of place, had he noticed.

"My task is complete," Alderaan told them. "My vengeance is over. I thank you for making this possible, but now I must return. I was never meant to be in this form for so long, and while I have no doubt you could have done this thing without me, my presence here disrupts balance."

"Then go in peace," Lysanias told it. "And thank you." He tore the ward off, and the spirit bowed and vanished. Lysanias turned back towards Vader, raising his sword. "And now, helmet man, we shall finish what we started and this reality will be safe from you!" *Then the soldiers we brought with us can take control of the station, and our jobs, having been completed, mean we can be on our way as well.*

"Except he's not the one," Jenny told him, somewhat apologetically.

Lysanias spun, mouth dropping open. "Come on, you've got to be kidding. Have you *seen* this guy?" He pointed.

"He's not the one," she repeated sadly.

"Problem?" asked Vader, igniting his saber.

## Chapter 13

Just About to see your Boss

When: That same instant

Where: Death star control room

Lysanias grabbed his shield out of sub-space and brought his sword to a ready position as Darth Vader circle stepped back and put both hands on his light saber.

"Are you sure?" he asked Jenny.

"I'm sure, he's not the one. I checked again and again, but I'm not getting so much of a tick on the old dimensional Geiger counter." She pointed to her head.

"I have no idea what that is, but I'll trust you." He turned back to Vader. "Look, Darth, may I call you Darth? All kidding aside you're not the person I'm looking for. Despite what the others might think, there's a far more evil and insidious person around than you. Personally I have no quarrel with you, and you can be on your way for all I care."

"What?" Obi-Wan and the others all gasped.

"Oh, no, he's not getting away," Luke promised, adjusting the dial on his light saber. "My name is Luke. You killed my father. Prepare to die."

"Actually, it would be more accurate to say Obi-Wan there killed your dad," Vader told him. "Left him to burn alive in lava, too. You know how much that hurts? It hurts a lot, let me tell you. Movies would show you sinking quickly into it, but lava is pretty dense. You burn away an inch at a time."

"Wait, what? He told me you did it!"

"Of course he did. You think you would have run around with him yelling about revenge and swinging *my* old light saber around if he told you the truth?"

He whirled on Obi-Wan. "Is that true?"

"Er, well..."

"Wait a second, you told me this light saber belonged to my father!"

"That's right, boy," Vader told him. "You have stumbled across the truth. I am-

"You were lying the whole time!"

"No, you don't understand, I am-

"Just be quiet a minute! Obi-Wan, was my father even a Jedi?"

"Sure, but not for long. He was inducted at the start of the clone war, and by the end, well..."

"And is he dead?"

"Er, how do you define 'dead?'"

"Define dead? How do *you* define it? Or is he a force ghost or something now?"

"No, nothing like that."

"Then give me a straight answer! Is my father dead or not?"

"Luke, I am-

"Shut up! I don't care what you have to say. I'm talking to Obi-Wan right now!"

"You know what, fine, I don't even care anymore."

Lysanias just shook his head. *Is he really this stupid?*

"Like I said, he's not dead."

"Oh, is he just resting?"

"Resting? No, not exactly. But he's not alive either. From a certain point of view."

"You'll only get riddles out of an old Jedi," Vader told him. "You've seen how he can't be trusted."

"Apparently not. I don't even know who I am anymore!"

"Perhaps the answers you seek could be found with me?"

"I suppose you're not as evil as he said, if he lied to me about you killing my father. Or half killing or making him go on vacation or whatever. Do *you* know if my father is still alive?"

"I do. He is still mostly alive."

"Mostly? Now you're talking... oh, he's a cyborg or something now, isn't he? That would count as only mostly alive. Duh, I'm a moron!"

"Obi-Wan left your father to die, but his will prevailed and he was saved."

"Can you take me to him?"

"I can."

"Luke, you can't be thinking of going with this man!" Obi-Wan protested. "He'll turn you to the dark side for sure."

"Oh, here we go with this nonsense again," Lysanias interrupted. "Look, do you see this guy?" He marched over and grabbed Tarkin, who was an ex-Tarkin at this point. "He couldn't use the force. But he ordered the destruction of Alderaan just the same. You think he would have been worse because he could levitate objects or block blaster bolts?" He dumped the body and looked around the room. "This is the control room, who pushed the button that activated the weapon that destroyed Alderaan?" Everyone looked over to one guy. "Was it you?" He hastily shook his head no. "*Was it you?*" Lysanias repeated. He nodded. "Thank you. See that guy there? Would he be any more 'dark side' because he could float objects around? All he did was press a button, and look what happened! There is *no such thing* as a dark side or a light side. Whatever you do, that's who you are. Case by case basis, just because Darth cuts a guy in half doesn't mean he can't pet a puppy or plant a flower garden. Nobody does just 'evil' or just 'good' things."

"Do you really believe that?" Vader asked, lowing and deactivating his saber.

"How can I believe differently? I mean the very idea is more like a shorthand than anything else."

"I see." Vader looked him over. "Who are you, exactly? I feel something quite strange about you through the force."

"I'm the one trying to save you all, yes, even you, Darth. I don't have time to get into it but that's why I offered to let you go. I have more important things to worry about than you."

"I'm not sure if I should be insulted or not."

"Believe me, he doesn't mean it like that," Jenny told him. "But join our side, and we'll answer all your questions."

"You can't trust Vader!" Obi-Wan protested. "This is madness!"

"We obviously can't trust you, liar!" Luke told him. "How is he any different?"

"It's totally different! I mean have you seen him?"

"Ah, I now realize how dumb I sounded a moment ago," Lysanias realized. "Sorry about that. But seriously, all that black and that helmet of yours don't help."

"It keeps me alive, what can I do?"

"Really? I guess he really did leave you for dead, huh? I don't know, paint it pink or something."

"Oh no, I like the black. Very slimming. Maybe paint a smiley face on the front?"

*No, that would be a million time worse.*

"No, Obi-Wan left my father for dead," protested Luke. "This is Vader, the guy he stole the light saber from. Try to keep up. I still haven't figured out why, he obviously had his own..."

"You know, your mother was never this clueless," Darth remarked.

"Who was my mother, anyway?"

"This is getting rather far afield of why we're here," Obi-Wan hastened to redirect the conversation. "Are you leaving or not, Darth? You can't fight all of us!"

"Hummmm." He looked around. "Three people with blades, even if one seems to be metal. But I couldn't cut it before so something odd is going on with it. I assume the stranger can at least handle it, Luke is standing all wrong and has the sloppiest grip I've ever seen so disarming him would be a matter of a second. Still, some of these 'spirits' seem very strong in the force. Even Leah, who displayed no such capacity when she was our prisoner. Very curious. Despite what you said before, that is you, isn't it Leah?"

"It's me," she admitted.

"I thought so. So bold, coming back here. If I had a daughter I would want her to be just like you."

"Don't change the subject," she snapped.

"Then there's the woman with the strange gun, she would no doubt gleefully shoot me while my attention was on the others."

"I wouldn't say 'gleefully,'" she protested. "Maybe excitedly."

"I stand corrected. And I have your word? I may retreat?"

"You have my word."

"In fact," Leah told them, looking around. "I'll even do you one better, Lysanias. Can I address the whole station from here?"

Darth gestured, and a microphone looking thing floated over to her. "Activate it," he commanded. The person in charge of that system did so.

"Attention, those on the Death Star," she said into it. "This is Leah Organa, rebel leader and princess of the late Alderaan. We have captured this station and killed governor Tarkin. It is completely under our control, and any attempt to retake the main control room will be repulsed by the same Jedi that allowed us to get this far. From now on, this station belongs to the rebellion. I offer you this choice; surrender or be destroyed. Search your hearts, and discover where your loyalties lie. How many of you are sickened at the thought of Alderaan's destruction? How many of you believe the empire went too far, but until now have had no channel for those thoughts? I am offering you that chance. If you believe in the empire, that it truly does good in the universe, I commend you for your loyalty." She covered the mic. "But not your stupidity," she said to the room. She continued. "I offer you the chance to depart in peace. Darth Vader is here with me, he will also be leaving the station. Take your ships and go. Those of you that wish change, real change in the universe, and a return to democracy, I invite you to stay and join our cause. There is only one other option." She took a deep breath. "If there is fighting in the corridors, if you cannot peacefully separate yourselves and go your separate ways, I will fly this station into the nearest star myself. You have been warned. I will not allow another world to be destroyed, but I will also not let this station be destroyed if I can help it. You have one hour to begin an evacuation, another hour to complete it. At that time this station will either plunge into the nearest sun, or take the now rebel crew to a secure location we can plan our next move. That is all." She held the mic up and it floated back to the controller.

"There you have it, I guess," Obi-Wan told him. "Now if you would, please get off our battle station."

"Will you come with me?" Darth asked Luke.

"Why not come with us?" Lysanias asked him. "You don't have to leave. You can choose a new path, here and now. But I warn you, if you aren't the threat I'm looking for, then perhaps your emperor is." *Though it wasn't the last time, but I suppose that means nothing.* "Whatever he has told you has been to manipulate you into doing what he wants. Take a hard look at your life, and the direction it's going in. Does the emperor offer you what you really want? Or does his path lead only to more destruction and death?"

"I have to find the truth myself," Luke told him. "I can't go with you, not as you are."

"I... understand. Very well. I will leave, for now. More to make sure your words are sincere than anything else. Perhaps we will meet again."

"I would relish your help against our *common* foe. I wish I had time to tell you more, but know that someone in this universe is not what they appear. They are being manipulated, moved about like a puppet, in order to bring about the end of all things. We are the only thing that stands between that entity and the death of every living thing in this universe."

"There are many wonders and terrors even we have yet have chart," Darth

agreed. "I will meditate on your words and seek the council of the force. Farewell." He moved to leave, and the others parted to let him go. With that, some followed him off the bridge while others stayed. Those posts that were now vacant were taken over by the rebels that 'appeared' out of nowhere, and the place was monitored. Naturally there was a fair bit of fighting but Leah made more announcements about how close they were to being hurled into a sun, which were true because she ordered the station moved to be near the local star. Lysanias repaired the door and then turned it into the same material as his shield, so even as various parties tried to retake the bridge they found their weapons couldn't scratch the metal from another reality.

It naturally took closer to a day to get everyone still loyal to the empire off the station, Leah's "two hours" estimate was way off, and by then everyone was back to being themselves. They got their clothes back from Jenny and Lysanias' sub-space pockets, and slept in shifts on the bridge. But the exodus finally completed, the TIE fighters being picked up by a star destroyer that had entered the system. It had come in response to the station being under attack, but after a warning shot from the main weapon decided they would not press the attack and instead help offload those that were loyal.

"After all," Leah had told the captain of that vessel. "You're getting people you *know* are loyal to the empire at this point, otherwise they would have stayed here. You can't buy that kind of support, you can only earn it. For whatever reason they think the empire is in the right, and you know, more power to them. Take them and leave, with my complements. It's that or we fire *at* you next time and convince the next ship that shows up. Or the next. Or the one after that. We can fire this weapon at low power all day long, so I'm told, and destroy a ship of your size in one shot. So go ahead, make my day."

Surprisingly, they didn't cause trouble after that.

*Of course, all the people left here may not be loyal. They may just stay to cause trouble. We'll have to watch them far more carefully than those that leave will have to be watched. Though I suppose if I was on the other side I would think some spies were mixed in for our side, so maybe not.*

With that the star destroyer zipped away and Leah ordered an inventory of who was left and what equipment and such remained, but reports were coming in too fast for the small team to keep up with. With the rebel ships aboard she decided to trust those that had remained, and ordered the Death Star to the system they had left to take stock and discuss their next move.

The station entered the corridor and appeared somewhat far from the planet's moon that housed the rebel base. They didn't want gravity messing either place up. More leaders were brought there, and more messages were sent that the Peace Moon had come under rebellion control.

"Peace Moon?" Lysanias had asked Leah, who coined the term.

"Of course. I mean Death Star? It's not a star, it's a gray color. And the weapon will never be used again, so it's not a death machine anymore either. What's the opposite of that? A Peace Moon."

"I see."

The force sensitives returned to the planet to resume their training, a troubled Luke seeming more broody than ever before. *Though I suppose he has a right to be.*

"So Darth Vader wasn't the shadow avatar," Jenny said to Lysanias that night.

"Why would it be that easy?"

"A good question. It's gotten craftier, I can tell you that. I guess our next suspect is the emperor himself?"

"Your guess is as good as mine. It wasn't the last reality I was in, but then this emperor of theirs could be a force user, where the emperor with Terra was powerless.

And it didn't go for Kefka either, who was the major power in that world because of his magic. So who would it go for otherwise? Anyone else high ranking enough, like Leo was, would have been on the station, logically."

"You got me. What's our next move, specifically?"

"Reaching the emperor isn't going to be easy, even with this battle station. In fact we shouldn't involve the peace moon at all. The emperor sees it coming, and he'll just flee, like the rebellion used to."

"You want to head off on our own?"

"I don't think so. I want to try something first. There must be more force users in the galaxy. I'd like to try calling them. Perhaps I can summon up the spirit of this planet, and use it to call to those that can hear it."

"Come here and be trained?"

"Exactly. Or at least 'you don't need to hide anymore if you already can use the force.' If we can go with a team of people strong in the force, and by that I mean they can use telekinesis really well thanks to me, that would be a big help. Like you said, a stealth mission like the last one is probably best, to take the emperor off guard."

"And that training would continue when we left."

He looked away. "I suppose."

"Come on, admit it. You want to start training people for your own reasons, don't you?" She bumped him with an elbow.

"Yes, I do. On my reality those with magic don't often get the training they should, for the sole reason they can't afford it. And those with supernatural power like I mostly use almost never do, because anyone that could have taught them died out when the chaos moon showed up. So what's the point of having those abilities? The same applies here, people that can use the force should be given the opportunity to. All this mysticism need to stop, and the force treated like learning to fly a fighter or paint. Just something some people can do and there's nothing mysterious about it. And I'll teach spirit sense and manipulating inner energies too, they should be able to do that as they can see my spirit. Consider it snubbing my nose at the mages guild back home if you want, teaching them for free and all, but I feel empowering people in any way I can is better than not."

"I agree, on both counts. They probably can learn spirit stuff. May even be doing it unconsciously. I suppose I'm not in any rush, that all sounds good to me."

"Glad to hear it, you're teaching people too."

"I was afraid you were going to say that. It's fine, I don't mind."

"Then I'll get busy trying to call other force sensitives here."

Lysanias went deep into the jedi temple, as many of the levels didn't have a rebellion presence. They were all mapped and had signs for the exits in case someone wandered down there, so he wasn't concerned about getting lost. He settled himself and tried to reach the spirit of the planet as though trying to talk to his own spirit. He didn't really have any luck that he could tell, but spent several hours "beaming" his message out into the void, using his ability to send thoughts to people "through" the force.

*Come and be trained. The force is with you. If you can hear my voice, this world is open to you, and we welcome you. Teach. Learn. Grow. Discover. Let ignorance fall away, give up your fear. The force means you no harm, it is like the ground at your feet, supporting you. Come to us. You will be safe, and your abilities can be gauged, then increased. We need your help, the universe needs your help. I call to all those that can hear my voice. Come to me.*

He did his best to send mental images of the place along with the message, of course giving the coordinates he got from Leah so they could use hyperspace to get there.

*I'll do this every day for maybe a week. If it's working at all, someone should arrive by then? Right?*

And it wasn't long at all before arrive, they did.

Chapter 14  
You Have Constructed a New Lightsaber  
When: A week later  
Where: Outside the rebel base

*It worked, it really worked!*

Lysanias, along with the other people being trained had been told to go meet a ship coming in that claimed to have a force sensitive aboard. It was a medium sized craft, probably big enough to hold a few people comfortably but not as big as the Falcon had been. A ramp lowered out the back woman climbed down, looking around at the people that had come out to greet her. Obi-Wan pushed his way through his students and grabbed her up in a hug, spinning her around in a most unseemly fashion.

“Ahsoka!” he had cried as he ran over, and Lysanias could feel the amazement and sheer joy Obi-Wan was feeling as he laid eyes on this person. She was laughing and hugging him, and as they turned to the group so he could introduce her he got a good look at her. She was about as tall as Obi-Wan but only if you counted her head “crown.” This was two “horns” that stuck up from the top of her head, which was bald. But like hair, two “tentacles” that were the same white and blue pattern on the “crown” hung down across her shoulders. Her skin was orange, and her face had what must be decorative white marks painted on it because Lysanias couldn’t believe natural marks could be that symmetric or geometric. Two thin light sabers hung at her belt, and she was wearing a dark skirt, sensible boots, and her top left her arms bare. But she was wearing some long fingerless “gloves” that covered her arms up to her elbows.

*She’s beautiful.*

“What are you doing here?” Obi-Wan asked. “No, forget that, I’m just so glad to see you alive! What have you been doing with yourself all these years?”

“Oh, a little of this, and a little of that. Helping in the early stages of the rebellion, planet hopping, you know how it is. It hasn’t been easy,” she decided with a laugh. “And there was certainly no time travel involved, I can tell you that much!”

“Time... What?”

“Never mind, it’s not important. You’re really here, and these must be the students? Hi, everyone!” She waved, ginning like a maniac.

“Students? Ahsoka, I’m confused. How are you even here? How do you know about them?”

“Would you believe the force guided me here? It’s been every day this week, like a message in my head. A vision of a green planet, and coordinates. Got a bit annoying, to tell the truth. Scared me half to death the first time, nearly chopped off someone’s head with my saber I thought I was under some kind of mental attack!” She laughed. “The look on that guy’s face! I apologized so many times!”

*Whoops. I guess I could ease up on it a bit, now that I know it got out. Anyone who could respond would probably already be on their way. Still, to think that it worked! I think that makes me almost as excited as these two are.*

“I got the sense of people learning, and a calling out to those that could use the force to gather here. So I took a chance it was some kind of trap and here I am. Almost bolted when I saw that huge metal moon you’ve got out there though! A very nice lady contacted me and told me it was fine though, she gave me the landing coordinates.”

“Our peace moon? Yeah, we should totally paint it pink or something.” He glanced at Lysanias. “But the black is just so slimming.”

She laughed. “Obi-Wan, you found a sense of humor? That would totally work! Put a big glowing sign at the top- Bob’s Greets and Eats! Oh, oh, what if you covered it with steel cables, painted them white, and called it the galaxies’ largest ball of twine? No one would be scared of it then, in fact people would come from neighboring systems to see it!”

He looked like he was trying to avoid smiling. “I’ll mention your ideas to the

council. They can't decide what to do with it now that we've captured it, so those are as good an idea as any."

"Ah, the old paradox of choice. You have so many things you could do with it, no one can decide what's best among them. Happens when I shop for toothpaste all the time."

"Yes, I'm sure."

"So don't just stand there, introduce me to everyone!"

"Of course. Everyone, this is Ahsoka Tano, Ahsoka, this is..." He went around and introduced everyone, not putting any special emphasis on Lysanias or Jenny, though both got a strange look from her.

"It's so great to meet you all," she gushed. "More force users, all in one place. Are you restarting the Jedi then, Obi-Wan?"

"I don't think so," he replied sadly. "I think that is an organization that time has passed by."

*And thank goodness for that, given the stories he's told about baby snatching and brainwashing that went on in the organization.*

"Hmm." She quirked her lips up, pressing them together. "I can't say I'm displeased with that answer."

"Were you a Jedi?" asked Luke.

"I was. I got framed for some things and rather than, you know, supporting me and not deciding my guilt until all the facts were known the people I thought were my friends turned away from me. My innocence was proven but by then it was too late. I had lost faith in the Jedi order and left to find my own path."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Leah told her. "You seem to have done all right for yourself since then."

"I've survived. Hey, were can I put my ship? I don't think you guys want it in your front yard here."

"Are you staying?" Luke asked a little too hopefully. Leah smacked his arm.

"What?"

"If you'll have me. I got the sense all force users were welcome to learn or teach as they were able. I'm sure there's more even I can learn, and I'd love to teach you what I know."

"You are welcome here, Ahsoka," Obi-Wan told her. "Let's get your ship someplace safe. I can assign you a guide if you want to stay here, or you can come with us. I'm taking the students up to the peace moon to see what sort of machine shops they have. I think it's time they started constructing their light sabers."

"Oh, count me in," she agreed. "Not only would I love to see the inside of that thing, this one," she patted one, "seems a bit flakey the last few months. I think maybe the crystal is out of alignment, or maybe it got cracked a little? I'd like to open it up and check it out if we're going to a place with tools."

"All right everyone, let's put Ahsoka's ship into the bay!" Obi-Wan called. "You know how I want it done."

"No way!" she said. "Do you mean?"

The others looked the range from excited to skeptical, and you can guess who the skeptical one was. (Hint, it wasn't Leah.)

"I don't know about this," he whined.

"What a shock," Obi-Wan muttered. Then louder "Working together with your friends, much can be accomplished," as he winked at Ahsoka. "Only if we need you, Lysanias. I know you could get the whole thing by yourself, and there's no need to show off in front of our newest member."

"Of course, master Kenobi," he said formally with a bow.

Ahsoka looked at him like "oh really?" and he colored and looked away. Jenny hid her smile behind her hand. The others concentrated, holding a hand out to focus their ability and get the ship off the ground enough to move it. *And what have I told*

*them about not needing to do that? It's a bad habit to get into, thinking they need to do that and then one day they'll be captured with their hands behind their backs and it'll be all 'well, can't use TK now, guess I'm stuck.'* Somewhat slowly and ponderously it lifted off the ground and started to move.

"Good, good," praised Obi-Wan. "Feel the force flowing through you. Connecting you to the ship, the ground, even each other. Now, forward!"

"Gently!" pleaded Ahsoka. "Watch out for that tree!"

They moved into the bay, Lysanias and Jenny hanging back. She nudged him.

"Go talk to her," she hissed.

"What?"

"Go on. You saw the look she gave you, and I saw how you were looking at her. You think she's *cute* don't you? I think you want to know if she's the same shade of orange all over."

He turned bright red. "What I think doesn't matter. She doesn't want to talk to me!"

"How do you know, you didn't ask her."

"What would I even say?"

"So you can talk Darth Vader into leaving his battlestation without a fight, but you can't strike up a conversation with a cute girl? You're hopeless. Come on." She grabbed his arm and pulled him along.

"Hey, stop it, er hi!"

Ahsoka had turned at their approach, and smiled at them. "Hi yourself!"

"Can you settle a bet for us?" Jenny asked.

"I guess? What's it about?"

"Well, my friend Lysanias here, and I'm Jenny just in case you forgot, says that these," she pointed to her "tentacles" "are actually a part of you. But me, I think they're just a fancy hat and scarf combo you're wearing. So, which is it?"

"He's right, it's all me," she announced. "Just this part comes off, at least without a lot of bleeding and screaming on my part." She chuckled and pointed to a fancy gold band set between her head part and her "horn" part.

*So I guess she's not orange all- bad thought, Lysanias, banish the bad thought.*

"He was right? That figures! Guess you won the bet."

*I didn't even know we had bet that! Did I black out or something? Or, wait, did she just make that up as an excuse to talk to her and get me over here? How did she do that? Could I really have done that?*

"Doesn't talk much, does he?" Ahsoka teased.

"Sometimes we can't get him to shut up, honestly. I don't know, maybe his batteries ran down. Can I touch them?"

"Sure, but don't squeeze them or anything. They're actually a sense organ."

"Really?" She put a hand on one and stroked it. "Oh, it's soft."

She shivered a little but recovered. "Yup. It tells me if there's movement nearby. I mean I can tell through the force, but no member of my race can be snuck up on."

"That's pretty cool."

"So, Lysanias, is it? Could you really lift that whole ship by yourself?"

"Oh, uh, well, I sort of threw a TIE fighter across a room when we sort of assaulted the Death Star. Trying to pick up a ship and gently guide it into the bay area? That's sort of a different thing."

"So you *can* 'sort of' talk! Obi-Wan certainly has faith in you, to say what he did."

*Oh, I can talk to anyone. Knowing what to say is the trick.* "I would hate to damage your ship. At least with them it's not far off the ground or going very fast if they dropped it. If I accidentally ran it into something I'd feel pretty bad."

She giggled. "Yeah, I don't think my insurance covers damage caused by a force user. Space rocks, yes. Lifting it without touching it? Not so much. I'd need the platinum policy for that."

Jenny laughed along with her but Lysanias had no idea what “insurance” was so didn’t really get the joke.

“Laugh, stupid, it’s funny!” Jenny prompted him, shoving him a little.

“What? But I don’t know what insurance is!”

“You’re hopeless!” she moaned, throwing her hands in the air. “That’s so totally not the point, you didn’t need to! Sorry about him, he was raised in a forest by wolves.”

“What are wolves, I’d love to hear about it. How do you two know each other?”

“Oh, we travel in the same circles and finally met just recently,” Jenny told her. “I’m not his girlfriend or anything if you’re wondering.”

“Now why would I be wondering that?”

“No reason, I just thought I would tell you, just in case. I like to be straightforward like that, saves time later.”

“I guess it must. Oh, they’re setting it down.” The ship settled into place and everyone relaxed. “That was really great everyone!” she praised, clapping her hands together. “I would have been hard pressed to do that, you’re coming along really well!”

“It’s the only thing they’ve really practiced,” Obi-Wan told her gruffly. “But I suppose it was adequate, given the number of people we have here working together. Come along, we’ll find a transport to take us to the peace moon.”

The group walked outside again but Ahsoka seemed distracted.

“Is everything all right?” Obi-Wan asked her.

“I don’t... I feel something. Ezra? Is that you?”

“Ezra?”

“Ezra!” she called, looking around wildly. “Ezra? Are you here?”

“I don’t think there’s any Ezra here,” Jenny told her. “I’ve gotten to know most people here.”

“His name is Ezra Bridger. He has two lines on his face, scars, just here.” She traced two lines on her face.

Everyone shook their heads. “No one around here matches that description,” Leah told her.

“Oh.” Her face fell. “But I feel he was here. Maybe it was before what happened? It felt a long time ago, but I just got so excited to feel him at all. I don’t know. I just hoped...” She trailed off.

“Wait, Ezra? I think I met a young man, a force user, with that name many years ago,” Obi-Wan recalled. “Yes, he was wandering around your planet as I recall, Luke.”

“My planet?”

“Yes, looking for you, I think. Along with another named Maul. I told him you weren’t quite ready yet to-”

“Wait, there was a force sensitive person looking for me, who could have trained me *years ago*, and you just told them to leave? Who gave you the right to interfere so much in my life? You killed my father, kept me from being trained- It just gets better and better the more you stick around, ‘Ben.’”

“Now, just a minute, you should get the whole story before-”

“Oh, I’ve heard enough,” he decided, stalking off. “I already have a light saber, so you can go without me.”

“Sorry,” Ahsoka told him. “I didn’t mean for that, you know.”

“And he wonders why I waited so long. He’s not ready to be trained now, his thoughts-”

“If you say something about the dark side, I will be very cross,” Lysanias told him, arms across his chest. “You, and you alone it seems, have made his life what it is today. ‘Killed’ his father, won’t tell him who his mother was, and recently nearly got his aunt and uncle killed. I was the one who saved them, you were nowhere near- are they even are his real aunt and uncle? I doubt it, at this point. Who here *really* is more dark side?”

“I had good reasons for all that!”

“Suuuure you did. I’m certain they’re perfectly reasonable, from a certain point of

view.”

“Well, yes.”

Even Jenny seemed skeptical.

“So what happened to this Ezra?” Leah asked her.

“I’m not sure. There was a battle, and from what I’ve learned since then the ship he was on was dragged into hyperspace by some organisms that call deep space their home. No one has seen or heard from him since.”

“I could ask if he’s still alive,” Lysanias volunteered. “Maybe you couldn’t reach him, but at least you would know if looking is still worthwhile.”

“Ask? Who?”

“The universe. It’s a long story, but the answer would be true, I give you my word.”

“I see. I’ll think about it. I guess you have no reason to lie to me, so I should trust you. I just don’t know if knowing would really help. At least now I still have hope, if he really wasn’t alive, well, that makes me the one who would have to tell his friends. They would take it pretty hard.”

“But they would have the right to know,” Jenny told her.

“I guess if I told them ‘the force’ showed me they would believe me. Like I said, I’ll think about it.”

“Up to you, just let me know.”

Some time later the group was standing around a machine shop on the peace moon and Obi-Wan was reluctantly disassembling his light saber. “This won’t hurt it, will it?” he asked, handing the crystal over.

“Not in the slightest. I’m just getting an imprint of the molecular structure so I can transmogrify these rocks into a similar crystal.” He indicated the rocks they had all picked out at his request before leaving, now on the table before them. “It’s totally passive.”

“You don’t know what insurance is, but you talk about molecular structure like you’re an exotic materials engineer?” Ahsoka asked, confused.

“My education was rather, uh, focused. I met some people back home,” *alchemists, specifically*, “that used words like that. I do tend to remember things when I hear them.”

“I see. But what’s trans- transm- what you said?”

“Watch and you’ll see.” He concentrated on the crystal, feeling it out a moment. *This isn’t something I’ve practiced, I haven’t needed to add new materials to my list. Hope I get it right.*

But he did, and then turned his attention to the rocks. Moments later there were six new crystals sitting there, ready to be turned into light sabers. *Good thing they’re small. I’ve been practicing reshaping material but not turning it from one thing into another. I was decent at it from before and it hasn’t been that long, so I haven’t lost it. I’ll have to get back into that next.*

“That. Was. Amazing!” Ahsoka told him. “How did you do that? Can you teach me? I had no idea the force could be manipulated on such a small level as to rearrange the molecular structure of a material!” Her eyes were shining as she looked at him.

“I’m sorry,” he said. *Maybe we should have done this in private and just handed them out later?* “It’s something only I can do. Like asking the universe about Ezra. I’ll be happy to explain why, later.”

“Good job! Maybe you can get her alone!” Jenny whispered to him, but not that softly.

“Oh.” Ahsoka’s face fell. “Well, that’s okay.”

“I can teach you some things, like this though.” He spirit stepped to the other side of the room and back.

“Yeah you will!” she agreed.

So the group started working on their light sabers, first coming up with a design for the hilt. Even Jenny got in on it, figuring a few could come in handy on her journeys.

"But how will you recharge it?" Lysanias asked. He was making one too, but figured once it ran out of power that was it for it. Still a nice reminder of this reality, and something the alchemists back home would love to see, but eventually useless. *Though maybe a remnant could figure out how to recharge it. Or I could use a spell to do it, I suppose, if I absolutely had to.*

"I've picked up all kinds of power converters over the years," she explained. "But the heart of the system is a "Mr. Fusion" unit I got years ago on this one world with flying cars and stuff. I just feed it garbage and it turns whatever I put into it into power. Then I hook that up to a converter and then into whatever needs to be charged."

"Oh." *That won't work for me, then.*

"Can't you generate lightning bolts on your own, though?"

"Sure, but these things must hold a ton of power! I'd spend weeks doing nothing but charging it."

"Not exactly," explained Obi-Wan. "Thing is, it's a loop. While some power is lost while it's on due to heat and light, most of it is just fed back into the crystal to recharge the battery. Now, if you're actually cutting something that's a different story, and they can discharge quickly. If you can feed it raw power I'm sure we can find a circuit to accept and distribute it."

"Oh."

"They're actually very versatile. Like Ahsoka's they can be long and narrow, or thicker, like Luke's. I've seen ones that are held at an angle and actually have a curve in them, and some that are double ended or that spin around."

"Wow! I think I'll stick to something simple."

"Good choice."

It took a few days, but not as many as you might think. With the advanced manufacturing techniques afforded by the technology here Obi-Wan simply had to show circuit information from his notes to a droid that worked in the lab, and they constructed what was needed in moments. Most everything was standard stuff anyway, moving power around or controlling plasma flow was a part of every blaster, after all. This was just a specialized application of "off the shelf" components. Same with the case, they took the drawing and each person's explanation and a few moments later out popped a design prototype from their fabrication machines. When each was happy a final version was milled with a CNC machine out of tougher stuff, and assembly began. Jenny's looked like a twisted tree branch, a design she said reminded her of a boy she had met named Tenchi.

"This tree branch shape reminds you of a boy? Don't you mean his sword hilt?" Lysanias asked.

"That too. Wonder if you could have learned to use the light hawk wings from him? Huh."

"Probably." *Light hawk?*

Lysanias created a bit more practical design which was essentially a smooth metal cylinder. To keep it at hand without needing to belt it on he bolted it to the back of his shield, which wasn't fabricated in any way and so could still be modified. The bracket went above the handle he held onto, for ready access should he need to grab it in a hurry. The rounded bottom unscrewed allowing access to the inner workings, and the top was flat and open to let the beam come out. To keep it in place and prevent any accidental activation it locked into the holder with a twist. While "docked" it was off, there was a cutoff switch at the bottom, pressed by the clamp that held it. Unclamping it activated a timer, and a second later the blade simply went on. The metal was touch sensitive so like all light sabers if it left his hand it would shut off, preventing it from

chopping through the floor or wall if it went flying. All in all an elegant system that allowed him to have it close at hand but still be completely hidden. The droids also built both he and Jenny a “recharging station” that he could fire lightning bolts into after placing the inner workings inside. Hers was more a converter for what the ‘Mr. Fusion’ put out, but luckily flowing electrons were flowing electrons in basically any reality. It was only the shape of the cable end that had to be adapted, and possibly have some resistors added so it didn’t blow up what you plugged into it. Obi-Wan said with minimal use or keeping the blade non-lethal (his adjustment control was inside, so again it had to be taken apart in order to be adjusted) it would go for a long time between recharges. Jenny’s adjusted with a twist of the top, where two “prongs” stuck out from the hilt. The energy collectors she “hid” as three “gems” on the bottom of the hilt, and kept giggling about them for some reason.

She was also particularly excited about their energy storage technologies, and kept pestering the droids and other workers there to give her all the technical details they could about the materials and techniques for making such high energy density devices.

Leah went for a more traditional design, with one unconventional addition.

“What’s that?” Obi-Wan asked, pointing to it.

“It’s a strap.”

“A what?”

“A strap. If it gets knocked out of my hand because I fall down or something I don’t want to go flying, now do I? This way it’ll be right there. I’ll just fit it over my hand before I start swinging the thing around. I realize it could be called to my hand with the force but what if it’s knocked off a cliff or something? I might not have time and then would be totally defenseless.”

The others looked at her. They looked at their own designs. They looked back at it.

“I may have to change my design a bit,” said Rontas decided.

“Me too,” Davish agreed.

“Yeah...” Chir’hi allowed.

“We were fools!” Obi-Wan decided. “How did we miss something so obvious?”

“No wonder they got wiped out,” Jenny whispered. But Obi-Wan heard.

“Too soon,” he chided.

Chapter 15  
The Ultimate Power in the Universe  
When: Three days later  
Where: Inside the rebel base

“Here you are,” Jenny exclaimed, coming into the room Lysanias was working in. “Obi-Wan wanted me to tell you another student arrived, and according to the peace moon another three are on their way even now. They just passed into the system asking about us.”

“That’s great!” He turned away from the samples he was working on and looked up at her. “How many does that make?”

“If those three pan out it’ll be fourteen, not a bad showing, eh?”

“Not bad at all, given how tenuous what I was doing to try and let them know we were here was. He’ll have to have another workshop to make light sabers at this rate. Obi-Wan only made a few extras in case more people showed up.”

“You never did tell him you’re the reason force sensitives started showing up, did you?”

“Ah, no. Let him think ‘the force works in mysterious ways’ and all that. It’s not really a prank at Inari’s level but I do what I can.”

“I guess. Whatcha doing?” She stood on her tiptoes and looked the workbench over, hands clasped behind her. Lysanias turned back and looked over his prototypes. On the bench were various cubes and squares in various materials ranging from glass to the same shiny metal his shield was made of.

“Air bombs,” he said peevishly. “If I can figure out the best way to make them.”

“Bombs? Tell me more!”

“I want to use air bending to pack a tremendous amount of air into one of these.” He held up a sphere about the size of a baseball. “Then I can throw it and somehow let the air out. I saw how that one storm trooper got knocked over just by the air pressure caused by the bunch of us teleporting to the Death Star. I thought it would be another non-lethal way to take someone down.”

“So it’s more like air grenades then. Can’t you just fling people around with the force now?”

“Sure, or air bending I guess would work. But that takes energy. This is something I want to prepare ahead of time. Plus if there’s a whole group tossing one of these into the center of them would be far easier than trying to get them all at once.”

“I see. So what’s the problem?”

“The problem is I don’t know how to get the air out. Or I guess more accurately how to keep it in until I want it to come out. My first thought was metal spheres like this one, then using space bending to tear them apart at the proper range. But I’m not very good at that, plus I’m trying to avoid energy loss using this, not lose more energy.”

“I can see that.”

“Then I thought, what about glass? It’s not that hard to break... Which became the problem.”

“The air pressure broke it, didn’t it?”

“You guessed it. I tried various shapes but couldn’t really get as much as I wanted in before it broke. Too little and I may as well not bother.”

“That might also cause jagged bits of glass to fly everywhere, and you could put someone’s eye out.”

“True. Even this ‘safety glass’ they let me look at which isn’t as sharp when it breaks would still do some damage. I don’t know if I can get around that. Honestly even putting an eye out I could heal that with alchemy. As long as someone doesn’t die from it, that’s fine.”

“I could show you how to make conventional grenades, you can probably make all the pieces. You wouldn’t need much explosive power because you’re going for the air

pressure not shockwave from expanding gasses. Just enough to break the case up, not blow up a person. Less lethal but still pretty complex to make.”

“Sounds even more labor intensive than just using that energy to make battery wards.”

“True, they should be as simple as possible.”

“I then went back to the square design, and glass, thinking maybe I could put a ward on the side to strengthen the glass. Then just throw it and quickly hit it with fire bending.”

“But again that would take energy.”

“Right. Plus what if I wanted to throw more than one? Or give them to someone to use? So I was thinking contain wards somehow, but they wouldn’t keep the air compressed like I want...”

“Well, what else can wards do?”

“Basically anything, I guess. Why?”

“Could you put two wards on something?”

“You know I can, we wore three armor wards plus an ‘ignore me’ one to capture the Death Star. It just decreases the effectiveness a little if they’re different.”

“Oh, right. So what about one that strengthens the glass, then another that is a timer, and sends out a burst of flame when you slap it on? You get both out, slap the one ward on the other, and throw. A regular grenade you have to pull the pin on, this would be no different.”

“Huh, that’s an idea. Or maybe put the ward on a string, and you slip a ring connected to the string on your finger before you throw. Once you throw the ball keeps going but the ward gets pulled off, and boom.”

“Have to be a pretty long string though, you don’t want to catch yourself in the blast.”

“True. I like the second ward idea but the timing is tough. Typically wards activate the second you slap them on. Trying to get a delay in their activation... I don’t know.”

“Could you activate it after you throw it somehow?”

“It’s a good question. I mean it seems like I should be able to, right? I can use bending anywhere within range, it doesn’t start with me. And my spirit can appear anywhere in range, it doesn’t have to come out touching me. So why not ‘suppress’ a ward from activating when you stick it on? I can make the other side sticky that’s no problem, so it would stay there. Then activate it without touching it. I’d probably have to practice it, and knowing me it would be random if it worked or not. I’d like to keep it just wards, I know I’m pretty good at them.”

“Can you make them smarter? Program them in some way?”

He rubbed his beard. “Maybe. I can put multiple effects into a single ward, I’ve never needed to because it’s easy enough to just stick two wards on somebody. But say I had the ward that made the glass harder to break *and* mixed it with another ward. Something that activated when it wasn’t near me anymore and shut the whole ward off.”

“You’d never be able to put the thing down.”

“Oh, right. Shoot, I thought we were on the right track there for a second.”

Jenny stood and thought for a moment, toying with one of the glass shapes she picked up from the table. “Maybe you still are. If you can make it just a little bit smarter, it’ll work. If you can set the ward to deactivate only if you touch it, then someone else gets near it without you being near it. You can put it in your sub-space pocket because that’s you touching it, no one else around. You can set it as a mine because that’s you touching, it goes off when someone else approaches. You can give it to others because you’re still around. You don’t get caught in the blast because it only activates when it’s not near you.”

His eyes widened. “Gee, I don’t know. I mean that sounds like a great idea, but can they get that smart? I have no idea. I’ll have to try it. Wow, if that works I could use it for other things too. Like contain wards, put the combined ward on something

someone is bound to touch, that is otherwise harmless. Zap, they get sucked in.”

“Like a cookie!”

“Er, I guess. I was thinking a doorknob, or a mat in front of a door.”

“Hey, nobody would pass up a cookie! On a cute little plate with some milk next to it? You would have to be pretty evil to walk by it.”

“No doubt.” *Why would anyone just pick a random cookie up and eat it, no matter what kind of plate it was sitting on?*

“Well, no charge for the consult. You better go find Obi-Wan though, he wanted to talk to you about getting another teacher for all these new force sensitives that are showing up.”

He looked up at her. “You mean having me come out and teach?”

She shook her head. “It didn’t sound that way. More like he knew where someone was, and wanted you to go get them. Just go ask him, I’m sure he won’t bite you.”

He stood up, and Jenny put the glass down. “I guess I better. I’m the reason he’s got so many people to train, after all. Still, Ashoka should be able to help, right? And you’re teaching them the spirit stuff. Does he really need someone else?”

“Which you could help with, may I remind you, as you brought it up?”

“Oh, eh, I guess.”

“Besides, Ashoka is out there, don’t you want to see more of her?”

“Well-”

Suddenly one of the rebel pilots ran into the room, looking relieved to have found Lysanias. “You’ve got to come quickly!” he told them.

“What’s going on, did someone get hurt?” Lysanias asked.

“Those three latest people that showed up are attacking us!”

“What?” both asked, shock registering on their faces. Lysanias grabbed his shield from nowhere as Jenny got out a gun, and he drew his sword. “Grab on to me,” he commanded, and she did. He envisioned being next to that tree outside, just near the practice area Obi-Wan used, figuring there wouldn’t be anyone in that exact spot. He *shifted*.

The scene before him was just as the pilot had described. Three figures in dark clothes and helmets that covered their faces stood there, while Ashoka, Leah, and Obi-Wan were covering the rest of the students. *Where’s Luke?* The three had light sabers, blood red in color, which they were twirling somehow and were either moving so fast it looked like they had two blades or what they were using had a blade on each end. The other students had their blades out but must have been practicing, they were dimmed so obviously on the non-lethal setting. Three ships sat nearby so what had happened was clear. The three landed, were greeted by Obi-Wan and Ashoka, and then the three had shown their intention was not to be trained, but rather to end this training altogether.

*Well, crap. I guess some other force sensitives got my message too, and these are the kind I didn’t want. They must work for the other side. Nice to have known people like that existed, I thought the only trained force sensitives were dead by now. I guess not.*

“Come on,” Jenny told him, grimly switching out her gun. She had chosen a snub little model (an SMG not that Lysanias knew that) but now had something with a much longer barrel in her hand. “They need our help.”

“Right.” Both spirit stepped, Lysanias needing only one to cover the entire distance, while Jenny caught up with him a second later.

“Where did you two pop up from?” asked the one on the right.

“I think they brought a blaster to a light saber fight,” said the one in the middle.

“This guy’s got a metal sword, like that’s some kind of threat,” said the one on the left.

*Says the person wearing bits of armor stuck on, but mostly just a cloth jumpsuit. Shouldn’t an elite force such as this one have better armor than the average*

*stormtrooper, not less?*

"Be careful, they're force users," Obi-Wan cautioned.

"Inquisitors," spat Ashoka. "I've dealt with them before. We can deal with them."

"What do you want?" Lysanias asked them.

"I'm pretty sure our intentions are clear," said the one on the left. He brought his spinning light saber in front of him. "We're here to end this little 'school' of yours before it becomes a threat to the empire."

Lysanias risked a glance back at everyone, then looked at the being out of the corner of his eye. "Wait, say that again?"

"We're here to kill these people training to be Jedi, before they become a threat to the empire," said the one on the left. "I told you the masks were a bad idea!"

"No, no, it's not that. You're worried about a handful of people training to lift a modest amount of weight from a distance and block blaster fire? Because you think that somehow this group of force users is going to become a threat to an organization with so many resources it can build a 140km wide space station that can destroy planets? That has ships all over the galaxy? Millions of troopers? Unlimited firepower? *Really?* This is who you're worried about?" He pointed a thumb behind him. "And they aren't training to be Jedi, that organization is long gone."

"I suppose when you put it like that it does sound a bit silly, doesn't it?" asked the one on the right. "But we can't take any chances. One Jedi, or excuse me trained force user, is worth a hundred regular people."

"Okay, but not ten thousand. They can block, at most, two bolts at a time. Maybe three if they're really lucky. Having four people shooting one Jedi at the same time means one dead Jedi. How can they be that much of a threat?"

"Oh, we hardly ever got shot at by that many at one time," Obi-Wan admitted. "Strange that, now that I think about it. We were always fired upon by the number of troops we could actually handle. Until the very end, when we weren't."

"And certainly the ship carrying any Jedi through space could be destroyed as easily as any other," Lysanias went on.

"Look, we're just doing our jobs, okay?" said the one in the center. "What do you want from us?"

"Now that you realize how pointless it is, go away."

"We can't do that."

"I was afraid you would say that."

They tensed up a bit more, but Lysanias shoved his blade into sub-space, followed by his shield. "Look, I don't want to hurt you, but I can't let you hurt these people. I brought them here, I'm responsible for them."

"Not that your antiquated *metal* sword and shield would have helped, and where did they go by the way, but putting your weapons away is not going to make us back down."

"Yeah, Lysanias, what are you doing?" Jenny asked him nervously.

"Look, I can probably take care of them. I assume that gun of yours is lethal?"

"Of course, these people have openly admitted they want to kill us."

"If I get into trouble, shoot them. Otherwise, I'm going to see if chi-blocking works on them. They seem humanoid enough, they must spend energy to move around like we do. I think I can take them."

"One swipe and that saber will smash right through you!"

"But I have *the force* on my side. Isn't that what these people are so worried about? Plus I'm pretty sure my armor can take it."

"I guess. Okay, good luck." She took a step back and swapped out her gun again for something a little more accurate and controllable than a shotgun.

"What does this guy think he's doing?" asked the one on the right.

"He seems insane," remarked the one on the left.

"And yet, everyone else is backing away to give him space," said the one in the

center. "Something funny going on here. Be ready for any tricks."

"Right," said the two, fanning out to come at him from the sides.

*Great, have to deal with just one of these guys at a time. And I think I know how.*

He used the force to shove them back, targeting the one to the right and left of himself. One went *soaring* back, smashing into a tree to the right of the practice area, while the other simply flew back, smashing into the building to the left. Both went down, losing their light sabers.

This enraged the one in the middle, who *threw his only weapon away.*

*Well that's dumb, why did he throw his- Huh? Oh, it's coming right for me.*

Lysanias, not wanting to get chopped in half, simply used metal bending (remember that?) and popped it into the air. High, high into the air, where according to local gravity it would take about two seconds to come down again.

"Er," the inquisitor managed as Lysanias instantly closed the distance between them and started punching him. He would have managed all four blows but he was fighting a force user, and the force warned him just enough to effectively dodge.

*Shoot, has anyone ever dodged that?*

The man then tried his trick against him, force pushing him away. Lysanias dug in, changing his stance to a more traditional Earth Bender style, and went nowhere.

"What?"

He then launched another flurry of blows against the man, this time connecting and making him go down.

By this time the two flung inquisitors were sprinting back to Lysanias, and the light saber, now deactivated, fell to the ground. *Shoot, would have been cooler if I could have caught it. Oh well.* "Here, take care of this for me!" he shouted, flinging it towards the group with metal bending.

Turning back to the two inquisitors that were practically on top of him again he saw the one to his left (he had turned around again) drawing back for a strike. He couldn't have that, so he simply used metal bending to pin the saber in place. This worked well, but brought the other one into striking distance as well. He still had control of the saber so he dragged it over to block the strike from the other one. The inquisitor tried to hold it back, tried to ward off the attack, but his efforts were just no use. The two sabers smashed into each other, energy arcing between them.

"What are you doing?" screamed the one.

"He's controlling it!"

*You just stay right there, boys.* With the back of the one now to him, Lysanias wasted no time in throwing some more blows around. Naturally he was still concentrating on holding the saber in place, so it wasn't as good as he could do, but he was coming from behind and the inquisitor didn't want to let go of his saber. So he paid the price of his foolishness and joined his comrade on the battlefield grass. The light saber, smart enough to realize it hadn't been thrown but rather dropped winked out.

"Two down, one to go," Lysanias told the man.

The man wasted no words in his rage, just swung. Lysanias, feeling a bit cocky at this point, tried to grab the man's hand and tear the light saber from his grasp. He missed, and the saber connected with his armor. The man grimly smiled, thinking the fight was over. But Lysanias punched him the chest.

The man went down.

*Great, I resorted to Korra style in the end after all. But I think I held back enough he's not going to die from it.* He looked down to see the blackened mark on his armor where the blade had hit him vanish. *Nothing to worry about. Guess my work on this armor paid off.*

"What did I just watch?" Ahsoka asked, turning her blades off.

"Something magnificent," Leah answered. "I want him!"

"I guess you saw him first."

“Oh, no, not *that* way, I want him in my army,” Leah clarified.

“Isn’t he already on our side?”

“Not in the way you might think. Come on, let’s go tie these guys up before they wake up and start causing us trouble.”

“Right.” Ahsoka seemed a little confused, but went to go help take the helmets off and blindfold, and bind their three new prisoners.

Chapter 16  
An Alternate Form of Persuasion  
When: A moment later  
Where: Outside the rebel base

"This won't hold us, you know," one of the inquisitors groggily said as they were put in handcuffs. "Soon as I can move on my own again, I'll get loose and tear this place apart."

"Uh huh," Leah agreed. "Sure you will." She turned away and motioned Lysanias to follow her a few meters away. "He's got a point though," she told him. "We don't really have anything that can hold a force user. If we post guards they'll just tell them to open the door and let them go. If we don't they'll just try tearing the door down. Killing them would be the simplest option."

"Which is how I know it's wrong. There must be some other way. Look, I can contain them for a few hours, enough time to think of something."

"Those wards of yours again?"

"Like the armor ones, yes."

"You told me wards could do most anything," Jenny remarked, coming up behind them. "Could you cut off their connection to the force somehow?"

"But how long will it take to make a new one? You don't have anything that can do that now, right?"

"Eight hours. My contain wards should hold them that long, if they're unconscious when we put them in."

"You mean *about* eight hours? Give or take?" Leah asked.

He shook his head. "No. Eight hours exactly. Just like it takes me ten minutes exactly to make one ward. Or ten minutes to get a single yes or no answer from the universe when I've asked it a question. Or nine minutes to open my personal dimension. The god who created our species wanted very precise timing on everything I did, apparently."

"Apparently," she agreed, looking skeptical. "So, could you do it?"

"I don't see why not. Rather specific, they won't be very useful when I leave here, but I don't mind working on one."

"So make it more general," Jenny suggested. "Like they can't use any special powers in an area near the ward."

"Oh, that's a good idea," Leah agreed. "But is the force considered a special power? I mean it's a part of them, it's like some beings having a better sense of smell. They can use the force, it's natural for them."

"Good point, I don't know."

"Wait, what about this? Jenny has been showing us energy based techniques, and you showed that stepping technique, right? Using the force takes energy, so if you cut them off from using energy they should be unable to use the force!" She looked a bit more excited than he would have thought, like she was going to be the one using them and not him.

"But does simply commanding someone to do something take energy?" he asked.

"Oh, probably not," she admitted. Then she brightened again. "But that's okay! We wouldn't have a *person* watching them anyway. We don't have the resources. But R2-D2 wouldn't mind, they just sit around most of the time anyway. Why not give them something to do?"

"Humm, compelling a droid to do something would be a neat trick," he admitted. "Okay, that seems the most sure fire way to keep them from escaping. I'll put them away and get to work."

He went over there, pulling three wards from sub-space, and Obi-Wan greeted

him. "Ah, done with your conference? Or was she just congratulating you on a job well done?"

"Er, no, she actually didn't say anything like that." *Which now that I think about it, she didn't even seem that impressed. I took out three light saber wielding force users with my bare hands. Maybe she just expects it from a guy who says he can travel across realities.*

"No? Odd, she seems like a people person. Ah well, I was impressed, so good job."

"Thanks."

"While you're here, I was hoping to talk to you about getting another teacher here for the students. If people keep coming in like this I'm not going to be able to handle them all myself."

"So Jenny said when she came to get me. You know of someone?"

"I did, and I think he's still alive. Master Yoda. I thought you and Luke could go get him for me."

"Because I have the best chance of convincing him to come given what we're searching for. I see, I see." He considered. "Would it take long to get there?"

"It's fairly far away, actually. I don't know the exact travel time because it depends on what kind of hyperdrive one uses."

"I see," he agreed, nodding. But something was nagging him. "Er, may I ask why Luke, specifically? I don't want to listen to his whining the whole way... there... You're trying to get rid of him, aren't you?"

"Ah." He had the decency to look embarrassed, looking down and scratching the back of his head. "It could be something like that? But if he asks, you could always tell him I had a force vision that it was best if he was away from here for the time being. I do keep getting an odd feeling, so it's almost the whole truth anyway."

Lysanias rolled his eyes. "Fine, I can take him away from here, get him out of your hair a few days."

"Thank you!" he gushed, grabbing Lysanias' shoulders. "You don't know how much it means to me."

"Oh, I think I do. You'll owe me big time when I get back."

"Anything!" He let him go.

*Then can I get the favor in advance and not take him after all?* "It'll have to be tomorrow though, I have to lock these guys down before they cause more trouble. I'll be making some new wards to do it."

"Ah. I sent him to get a ship ready and put some supplies together, which he whined about of course, but it should keep."

"We could take my ship," Ahsoka told them, running up eagerly. "It's got room for a few people, if they're, you know, friendly."

"I'm going too," Jenny announced, stepping up.

"Oh." She looked disappointed, and perhaps was trying to think of a reason Jenny shouldn't go. She masked it and tried to look more excited. "I mean, you're welcome to-"

She held up a hand. "Lysanias here is my ticket out of this reality. I go where he goes. If something happens, like the shadow avatar shows up, he won't have to come all the way back here to pick me up."

"Hey now, what kind of person do you think I am?" Lysanias protested. "I wouldn't leave you behind, that would be a terrible thing to do!"

"Believe me, I know the current you wouldn't. But I know people change their minds about things. Even join the shadow avatar for one reason or another. You're not getting out of my sight, bub."

"Really? Wanderers have gone, to use the local term, dark side?"

"At least one I know about, so I'm sure it happens, and more than Inari or Silverstreak would probably admit to. If I'm there at least I can get a little warning."

“At least we’ll be balanced in terms of boys and girls, I guess,” Ahsoka mused. “I’ll go tell Luke to get more supplies and load my ship up, instead.”

With her gone Jenny stunned each of the inquisitors with a boxy, hand held, laser style weapon that really “phased” them, and he popped them into wards. “I’ll go get to work. If anyone needs me I’ll be back in that work area you found me in before, Jenny.”

“Got it!” she told him.

Some time later she came up behind him and slammed a large rock down on the table.

“What’s this?”

“I think an answer to your problem with the air bombs, grenades, whatever.”

“You brought me a rock? That’s sweet of you. Is it supposed to represent my head, or something?”

She laughed. “Yup! But no. From what I’ve seen you do, you can turn the inside of this rock into air, right? You don’t have to turn the whole thing at once?”

“I guess. I have no idea how much air rock would become. This one is pretty big too. Throwing it any distance would be an issue.” *Well, maybe not with my enhanced strength.*

“Shrink it down beforehand. Then leave just a thin shell of rock on the outside to hold the air in.”

“But if it’s too thin it’ll just burst out before I can contain it.”

“Thought about that too. Use your spirit to air or earth bend the rock and keep it together. Meanwhile you put the ward markings on it that are needed, and then they can relax their control.”

He stared at her.

“What, do I have something on my face?”

“Use my mountain spirit as a *helper*? I never considered that!”

“Just a combat monkey, huh?”

“Monkey?”

“Never mind. You just think of it as something to call out to help you fight.”

“Yeah. But to actually help me make things? Wow, what a great idea, and I bet my spirit would love to be more involved in what I do! Thanks a lot!” *Wonder if it could make wards? Talismans? I don’t see why not.*

“Of course. Glad I could help.”

“Man, I can’t wait to try it. But I’m in the middle of this, so we’ll have to see if it works later.”

“Sure, doesn’t have to be right now. I just happened to see that rock and think about another way to make your air bombs. Keep up the good work, we won’t leave without you!”

“Thanks, but that’s an empty threat. You don’t want to be alone with Luke on this trip.”

“Oh, he’s not so bad.”

Lysanias raised an eyebrow.

“But I’d rather travel with you, if I’m being completely honest. I can talk to you about stuff outside this reality and you’re actually interested because you might run into it in *your* travels. He doesn’t care. So yeah, you’re the better company.”

“That’s better. See you later.”

“See you.”

Almost nine hour later Lysanias put the finishing touches on the prison he had constructed for the three inquisitors, and right on schedule they tumbled out of the wards into it. He had made four wards, one for each wall of the room, and he hoped they worked. They hadn’t burned up when he made them, so they were doing something, at least. Each was hidden behind a section of wall, having been torn out and

then replaced with alchemy. They all looked relieved to be out of the ward, and then horrified again as they realized their confinement had continued.

"Hey," he shouted to them through the bars of the door. It had a porthole you could look through, and he banged one of their sabers against it. "You want this?"

"What happened, where were we?" one demanded to know.

"Oh, you would rather play question and answer than cut your way out? That's fine." He started to lower it.

"Wait, what's your game?" asked another. "Why are you taunting us this way?"

"This is your one chance to escape. Take it or leave it."

He seemed conflicted but held a hand out to try and take the saber back with the force.

Nothing happened.

Lysanias breathed a sigh of relief.

"What did you do to us?" he demanded. "Why can't I use the force anymore?"

"You can, just not while you're staying with us. Believe me, it's this or a firing squad, you're too dangerous to just let go. Leah wanted you dead but I don't want to get into that habit. Maybe when the war is over you can be freed and live your own lives again."

"The war will be over when the rebellion is crushed!" said the other one.

"Perhaps. You did see your old Death Star hanging there, right? That's just the beginning of the end for your empire."

"Ha! We'll see."

"I guess. Anyway, someone will be down shortly with some food, it'll be shoved through the slot in the bottom of the door. Don't try any mind tricks, it'll be a droid that delivers it."

"You won't get away with this!"

"I already have. Sorry." He closed the cover on the porthole. *I suppose from their perspective I'm the bad guy, locking them up. I feel bad about it, but like I said I can't just let them go. What else am I supposed to do?*

"You okay watching them, R2-D2?"

"It's fine, I don't mind," they replied. "I just wish they had a terminal connection down here. I could still monitor things and check for hacking attempts."

"Maybe someone can rig one, or maybe I can when we get back. A couple of us are heading to find another Jedi master, to help with the training. We'll be back soon."

"I'll see you then."

"Yup, see you."

But as he walked away he got the strangest feeling that was the last time he would see the little droid, but it quickly passed and he went to go get something to eat for himself.

Bright and early the next day the four boarded Ahsoka's ship and took off for Dagobah. She said it would take about two weeks to get there, which was fine with him. "It's on the other side of the galaxy you know!"

"No, I don't know. How big is the galaxy?"

"How big is the galaxy? It's huge! Huger than a billion of the biggest things you can imagine being stacked next to billions of things even bigger than that! Come on."

*Wait, that doesn't answer my question.*

So to pass the time he made as many of the new energy denial wards as he could while Luke and Ahsoka practiced. The ship was far too small to have them swinging blades and leaping about as they were, but he could shrink them easily enough using alchemy which made the space seem twice as large. He didn't want to shrink down the sabers, but a simple pipe severed as a crude stand in. Lysanias had lightened them as much as he could, so the sound of them banging was a constant background. It was now three days into the journey, and Jenny, the most restless one as

she didn't really have any training or building to do was typically in the cockpit watching the sensors and such. Today though, he was trying to get a little quiet so he was the one in the cockpit while she watched them practicing. But before long he sensed someone approaching, and turned to look at the door opened.

"I just can't get over how cute they both look in their chibi forms!" Jenny told him, coming into the room. "I just want to scoop them both up and snuggle them, one in each arm."

"I'm sure they would appreciate that."

She laughed. "No doubt. Didn't want you getting lonely in here, how is it going?"

"Fine. I've exhausted myself making wards, so I'm researching the ward to trigger another effect on the same ward on or off. I think I can make it smart enough to do everything we want, which will certainly make some of my other wards more versatile."

"You're welcome."

He grinned at her. "Yes, yes, credit where credit is due, of course. I see the appeal of traveling with a group now. Even if everyone has different abilities or styles of magic, they can still have different ideas about what they see everyone doing."

"Why do you travel alone?" She leaned against the wall and looked down at him.

"I didn't, back home. I was woken up by a dwarf and a gnome, and toured the world with them. But they were always saving me, and I didn't find a place I really wanted to settle in. There was just so much to see in the world my world had become. When Inari offered me the chance to save other worlds, and learn people's skills, I didn't have to think about it for long. I felt I had to prove I could take care of myself, and maybe when I go back someday show my friends they don't need to worry about me."

"The way you moved before, I don't think they'll have anything to worry about."

"Sure, people are easy. But I can't take out remnants like that, or dragons, or demons. In fact there's plenty of things I couldn't take down back home, so I think I still have a long way to go."

"Speaking of that, why not take a little break and go over that chi-blocking with me?"

"Oh, that's why you came back here? Sure, I can get the diagram out and go over it with you. It's basically just hitting people in the right place, there's nothing supernatural or magical about it. If you already knows martial arts like you said and can attack both quickly and accurately you should have no trouble."

"I remember, why do you think I'm so interested? And you're always busy with stuff but now we've got days and days and I've got you cornered so *get it out!*"

"Okay, okay-"

"Get it out?" Ahsoka screamed from the other room. There was a patter of feet and the door was thrown open. "Not in the cockpit!"

"Where else would you get it out but the *cockpit*?" Jenny asked innocently.

Both ladies burst out laughing, and Luke poked his head around Ahsoka's. "What's so funny?"

"You don't want to know," Lysanias told him, who wasn't exactly sure if what they were talking about was what he thought they were talking about.

"Keep your clothes on in here or I'm telling mom!" huffed Ahsoka, folding her arms.

"You've been dying to say that, haven't you *little sis*?" Jenny asked.

"Maybe. Come on Luke, back to work."

"What? Can't we have a snack? I wanna cookie!"

Ahsoka shook her head. "No, no, Luke, it's only cute when I do it." She tossed her tentacles and dragged him away.

Several days later Jenny was practicing chi-blocking with Lysanias while looking at the charts he had stolen from the equalists while Ahsoka and Luke did a meditation exercise to the side. The space only big enough for one pair to practice in they had to

take turns, which was fine. The spirit was out, as it couldn't be chi-blocked, so Jenny could hit it all day long and Lysanias could tell if she was hitting the right place or not. He had completed several of the air bombs, using his spirit to control the reaction while he painted the ward symbols on. The spirit was delighted to be included in all of this, and they had made some tests with very tiny pieces of metal that Ashoka had lying around. It turned out that it didn't take much initial mass to get a lot of air, and something as heavy as a large rock was really going to be something when it went off. Naturally he hadn't tried the biggest rock they had collected, the ship wasn't that big and they got a good sense of things from the smaller ones. But the double wards worked, allowing him to leave a "trap" or throw it, then pick it back up safely if it hadn't been triggered. But once he was out of range and someone else was in range, it did trigger and the eggshell thin layer of material holding the air in burst apart nicely.

At the moment Lysanias was allowing himself to be hit by Jenny to see how close she was coming to hitting his pressure points for real while the spirit watched. Suddenly he staggered, and Jenny got excited because she thought she had gotten some good hits in. But at the side of the room Ahsoka gasped and winced, holding her head, and Luke's eyes popped open, his meditation broken. Jenny looked at them in surprise.

"What happened? I guess it wasn't just me hitting him."

"Something bad," Lysanias told her, looking back towards the back of the ship as though he could see something there.

"Something at Yavin?"

"I think something happened to Obi-Wan," Luke told her, a haunted look on his face.

"I think something happened to everyone there," Ahsoka clarified, cracking her eyes open. "You all felt it?"

"I felt something," Lysanias agreed. "Something terrible."

"Wait, you don't think they were attacked, do you?" Jenny's look hardened.

"Worse than that," Luke said. "This was so sudden. A betrayal. Unexpected. Shock, then nothing."

"There was shock, then nothing," Ahsoka agreed. "I think *all* the force users died at once." She got up, looking out the window with a mixture of anger and sadness on her face. She pounded the wall with a fist. "I don't believe this! We shouldn't have left!"

"That's impossible! Even if the inquisitors got out somehow, they couldn't have killed everyone at once!"

"I know what I felt. You said you felt it yourself, don't tell me now that you didn't."

"Lysanias?"

He considered, and nodded. "Maybe the peace moon wasn't as secure as we thought."

"But we left a team of our people in the control room," she protested. "With the door reinforced it couldn't have been taken by force."

"Unless someone cut their way in through the floor, or ceiling," Luke countered. "Or a droid hacked past what R2-D2 put in place and got it open. Or they just gassed everyone, or cut the air off-"

"Okay, we get it, there were lots of ways it could have happened," Lysanias told him.

"Do you... do you really think the whole *planet* got destroyed?" Jenny asked.

The three looked at each other and nodded. "I'm afraid that may be what happened," Ahsoka told them sadly.

"Look, we don't know anything for sure," Luke protested, his palm raised towards them. "We're getting to Dagobah. Let's just keep going for now and find this Yoda person. There's no sense going back. We'll find them and head back within a day, whatever happened there's nothing we can do about it now. Getting back there in ten days instead of twenty won't change what's happened. And I'd rather have another Jedi by my side when we return."

"Exactly," Jenny told them. "The timing is suspicious, isn't it? We're just far enough towards our destination it's silly to go back. Your premonition happened two days ago and we would have. Even if the planet got destroyed, we might have been able to catch up, track the Death Star somehow. But now, he's right, we may as well go on. Very cunning on the part of whoever did this. And I think we all know who that is."

"You think the shadow avatar is involved?" Lysanias asked.

"That's exactly what I'm afraid of. That they are now in control of a weapon that can destroy a planet a day."

"Then why are we here? Why not take it over while we were on the surface? That's one less wanderer and one less *shifter* to deal with all in one stroke. Hard to pass up, if you're looking at it from the dark side."

"It's a good point, I guess. But who knows why that being does anything they do? Maybe they were just too far behind? Maybe they wanted us to despair, knowing we could feel our friends dying and be helpless."

"And this way they get away without any chance of interference by you two," Luke agreed. "Maybe they weighed getting rid of you against the chance to get the Death Star under control and get away, and so they took that option."

"We would have a hard time tracking it," Ahsoka told them. "It'll be days before we get back there, they'll be long gone by then."

"And more planets will be destroyed," Jenny figured.

"If that's what happened at all," Luke countered. "We don't know for sure, just that something bad happened. Maybe they're fine, and we're just overreacting."

"Maybe," Ahsoka allowed. "But I felt something similar before, and I know now that it was when Alderaan was destroyed. There were less people there, but we knew them, and that would heighten our sense something was wrong. Mark my words, we're in a lot of trouble."

Glumly the others nodded. No one was interested in training anymore that day, and they sat in silence as the hyperspace corridor rolled by them, uncaring of their petty concerns.

And then the brilliant green planet was before them.

## Chapter 17

My own Council will I Keep

When: Having arrived at Dagobah

Where: High above the green world

The days following the initial “bad feeling” the force users got were not easy ones. Tempers were a little shorter, but mainly it was because every few days the group felt what they thought was another planet being destroyed. Three times they had been hit by a psychic shockwave, and there was now no mistaking it.

Planets were dying.

But there was nothing the group could do, hyperspace travel meant the Death Star could warp in, destroy a planet, and be halfway across the galaxy to destroy the next one two days later. They could only focus on their mission and then get back to Yavin to see if there were any survivors, try and get the story of what happened, and make a new plan.

“And now we have a new problem,” Ahsoka announced, looking over the various readouts her ship was providing. “Finding one small, green, Jedi master on a planet predominated by green stuff.”

“It is an awfully pretty world,” Jenny agreed. The group was looking down on it in from orbit, and there seemed to be no evidence of cities, towns, or even nomadic groups anywhere. Just vegetation of one kind or another.

“Oh, it’s pretty now,” Luke agreed. “But wait until we’re knee deep in the mud, and it’s raining, and there are insects the size of your head trying to eat your head.”

“Figured you would appreciate a world like this,” Lysanias told him. “Given where you came from.”

“Oh, I do. Sand gets everywhere. But then, so does rain.”

“The question remains, how do we proceed?” Ahsoka turned to look at them.

“Can the force guide us somehow? I mean I can put my light saber in place before someone pulls the trigger on a blaster. Can’t I go to where landing would find me a Jedi master? I mean there’s three of us here, let’s use the force. It’s been great about telling us ‘hey, planets are exploding’ which does us no good at all. Why can’t it tell us something *useful* for a change?”

“Luke, I don’t think it works like that,” Ahsoka told him. “There’s a big difference between letting the force guide your hand into position a split second before you get shot and traveling a half hour to where you’ll find someone. And we feel the planets dying,” she paused and blinked back tears, “because that’s something big. Yoda, according to Obi-Wan, is fairly small.”

*That probably would have gotten a laugh in other situations.*

“Er, dumb question, but we do know that Yoda is here, right?”

“I asked just after we left, he’s here,” Lysanias assured him.

“Can’t you just ask to narrow it down?”

“If we needed to find someone in a city, sure. Go so far this way and so far that way. Done. This is a whole planet we need to search. A forest planet. But yes, I’m willing to see what I can come up with if it comes to that.”

“What about that spectral form or whatever you called it?” Jenny asked. “Can’t you project your senses and go pretty fast?”

“Yes, I can. Finding my way back could be an issue though. Besides, if I’m going that fast I’m really going to miss him.”

“Ah, true.”

“Let’s think about this,” Ahsoka decided. “What if Lysanias wasn’t here? Let’s say I wasn’t here either. Obi-Wan is cut down by Vader because he doesn’t get rescued,

right? There's no force message to draw me to Yavin, so Luke just goes wherever the rebellion tells him to go. But he still needs a teacher. Somehow he figures out Yoda is still alive and where he is. Maybe he gets Obi-Wan's journals from back home or something, I don't know."

"Maybe I could have gotten a vision about it?"

"Maybe. Like I said, doesn't matter. He comes here alone. How does *he* find Yoda?"

"And by him you mean me? I have no idea how I would do it. There's a whole planet to search! I'd probably just land someplace and hope Yoda came to me. He's the supposed master, shouldn't it be his responsibility?"

"Ah! But how would Yoda know to come find you?" Jenny asked.

"Er... The force?"

Her face fell. "Hoped you might have a more specific answer to that one. We could just do that, in that case. But we're back to square one."

The group sat in silence a moment as Lysanias paged through his book about things he had learned in his travels so far. "Here's a promising entry, the spirit stuff I was doing with Korra," he decided. "Just like my mountain spirit can give me information about things inside mountains, spirits can tell me about things that pertain to their domain. Dragonfly can tell me about swamps, hawk can tell me about treetops."

"Is Yoda likely to be near a treetop?" Luke asked.

"Well, maybe not, but there's a lot of them down there. Maybe moon would be better, this place has a moon. Even wind, I guess, depending on how windy it is there."

"So what's the actual plan?" Ahsoka asked.

"Let's head down, I'll step out and call some spirits. They might be able to lead us where we need to go."

"It's a place to start," she admitted, and began the landing procedure.

Now on the ground the group stood around the ship while Lysanias chanted. He was going for Dragonfly first, and wanted to call for several minutes. *I just hope there is a dragonfly like creature around here.*

Jenny had some kind of handheld unit out, and was playing it about the area. "Tricorder says there's a lot of life around here," she told them. "No signs of intelligent life anywhere though."

"How would it tell?" Luke asked.

"Air quality samples, mostly. Industrialized worlds have certain concentrations of things, planets without don't. Even the most primitive of people make fires to keep warm, and drive off predators. But there's not enough smoke particles in the air. There is a lot of moment through the trees, and it can pick up sounds of animals we would miss. I don't know, it's science, I just use it I didn't take one apart!"

"Seems a pretty wet area though, smoke might not travel all that much," Ahsoka protested.

"There's no word for crisp on Ferenginar," Jenny said cryptically.

"Oh, yeah, I've heard that," Luke agreed quickly.

"No you haven't. It's from another reality."

"Are you sure?"

"Pretty sure."

"If I could just interrupt a moment?" Lysanias asked. "The spirit tells me there is one unnatural structure near a swamp on this entire planet. Let's head there, and maybe we'll find our wayward-"

"Sun!" exclaimed Luke, looking up. The sun had just broken through the clouds above. "That's a sight for sore eyes!"

"They'll be sore if you keep staring at it," Jenny agreed, snapping her tricorder closed. "Let's go."

Following the directions of the spirit the group skimmed the trees and headed to Yoda's house, which was indeed set up outside a swamp.

"I can't land there," Ahsoka protested. "This ship will sink into the swamp for sure!"

"I suppose we could build another one," Jenny told her. "But then that one might sink into the swamp. So we could build another, and hope it doesn't burn down, fall over, and sink into the swamp. I'm sure the forth one would stay up!" she yelled dramatically.

"Are you feeling okay?" Lysanias asked her. "Let me off, I'll see what I can do." He called his mountain spirit out and they both jumped out of the ship that was hovering over the place. *This place has plenty of ley lines, so there's no shortage of energy for me to draw on and recharge myself with.* The pair used earth bending to raise some rocks from below, making a platform the ship could land on, which it did.

"Will it hold?" Ahsoka asked, looking nervously down at the ground.

"We shouldn't be here long, and my spirit can stay here and watch over it. The hut is right over there."

"Okay. But you'll owe me a ship if I lose this one."

"Sure, I'll just wait until intelligent life evolves on this planet and is advanced enough to create hyperdrive engines. Then I'll buy you one. Shouldn't be more than a few dozen years, right?"

"More like millions, if at all," Jenny told them, looking around. "Pretty high concentration of tree life here, that means lots of fruits and things to eat. Organisms only evolve in times of stress, or if resources become scarce. Not much chance of that happening here for a while."

"Anyway, let's get this over with," Luke demanded, heading for the hut.

Which turned out to be empty.

"What, is he off at the grocery store?" Luke wondered aloud. "Where would a Jedi master go?"

"Actually, his ship must be around," Ahsoka reasoned. "Maybe he got some kind of warning from it that another ship was in the area?"

"What?"

"A ship. He got here somehow, where did his ship go?"

"Are you still worried about your ship? We have to find this guy and get back to find out what happened to Obi-Wan!" Luke told her.

"Maybe he ran off when he heard our ship land?"

"Why would a Jedi master run from a ship?"

"Why be here at all? To hide."

"Oh. Is there some way to tell him we're harmless?"

"Mostly harmless, speak for yourself," Jenny told him, a gun in her hand which then vanished again.

"Fine, harmless to him. Yoda! Jedi master Yoda!" he called out the door. "We mean you no harm, come out! It's me, Luke. Obi-Wan sent me to find you!"

The group listened, but only the swaying of the trees and sounds of wildlife met their ears.

"Great, he probably died two days ago," Luke grumped. "Knowing my luck."

"No, he's alive," Ahsoka told them. "Just not here. He hasn't been here for some time, in fact. I feel it. Let me try something." She settled herself on the floor and closed her eyes, remaining motionless for several minutes. (Not ten though) "I think I know!" she exclaimed. "We need to go lower down. There must be a valley or something near here. He's there, I'm sure of it."

They went back to the ship and took off again, Ahsoka scanning the area for "lower down." (Not enough to be "upside down" but just a lower lying area.) With one

found she sped towards it, and this area seemed dryer. She was able to land and the group once again climbed out of the ship. Before them seemed to be a field with tiny plants growing, too regular to have happened by chance. "This way," she told them, heading off. A moment later they came upon a small, green man carefully putting seeds into a hole he had just dug. "Yoda!" she exclaimed, running over to him. He looked up in obvious surprise as the other three gathered around him. "It is so good to see you again master Yoda," Ahsoka told him, bowing formally.

"Good it is to see you as well, Ahsoka," Yoda replied, stiffly standing up. "It seems that discovered, I have been."

"Let me introduce my friends. Everyone, this is master Yoda. Master, this is Lysanias, Jenny, and Luke."

Lysanias and Jenny did the same kind of bow, but Luke just stood there. "Wait, really?" he asked. "Him?"

"Of course, show a little respect!" she snapped, whacking the back of his head.

He laughed. "Of no consequence it is. Master Yoda, I no longer am. Too long away, I have been. Yes. Just Yoda now, I am."

"Nonsense, you're just as spry and healthy as when I last saw you. You've got many years left ahead, master!"

"Kind it is for you to say. Yes. Kind. But dark tidings I fear you bring. Very dark. Come, sit with me, you will. Tell old Yoda why you have come, you will. Yes! This way!" He hobbled over to his camp, and Lysanias pulled some tree trunks over for them to sit on.

"Oh, strong in the force you are," Yoda remarked. "But yet, not? A puzzle to me you are, yes. Not like these others, they are known to me."

"It's part of why we're here."

"Then the beginning you must start at, yes?"

"You know me?" Luke asked.

"Oh yes. Long have I watched you. Watched you seek adventure, and excitement. Ha! A Jedi craves not these things."

"Yeah, usually they found us whether we craved them or not," Ahsoka reminisced. "Any Jedi would tell you they got their fill no matter what they were doing."

"Humm, true, this may be. But true my statement was as well. Reckless, he is. But not why you are here. Tell me why I feel planets being lost, and the dark side of the force gaining in strength."

"Planets, plural?" asked Jenny. "So that really is what they've been feeling?"

"Did you not know? I thought you had come because of it."

"No. We left before it happened. So Obi-Wan really is gone." The group sadly looked down.

*As well as the students, the droids, the equipment on the planet. The shadow avatar has a lot to answer for this time.*

"Gone, he is. One with the force now, is Obi-Wan. So few of us left. But come, it is your story I wish now."

So Lysanias told it again, and Jenny told of the things she had seen the shadow avatar do in her travels. They finished with saying they had come to find him, in hopes to persuade him to come and teach.

"But it seems there is no one left to teach, if what you're saying is true," Luke told them. "The Death Star is back in the empire's hands, and the rebellion is over. We lost. If you no longer consider yourself a Jedi, and Ahsoka isn't one from years ago, that makes me the last. The Last Jedi."

"Roll credits," Jenny muttered.

*What are we rolling?*

"So certain are you?" asked Yoda.

"You're the one that said it."

"So certain you are a Jedi, I mean. But leave that for later, we will. Giving up as

well, the rest of you are?" Yoda looked at Lysanias.

"No. I can't leave until this reality is safe. A planet here and there is nothing compared to all life everywhere in the universe being destroyed. We can catch the Death Star and put a stop to this." *Somehow. I hope.*

"Indeed. Decide, you must, on what course you will take."

"Doesn't the same go for you?" Luke asked.

"I do not take your meaning."

"I still need a teacher. Lysanias can't do it, he'll leave eventually."

"Hey, what about me?" protested Ahsoka. "You think I couldn't train you? I've been kicking your butt since we started practicing together!"

"Sure, but do you want to keep doing that? It's not what you signed up for, so I didn't want to just assume you would stay and train me. You have your own stuff to be doing. Yoda's just planting stuff. On a world basically overrun with plant life already. What good does that do anyone? He's got the knowledge and the time, so he makes the best choice."

Yoda shook his head. "A confession to make, I have. Expected you, I did. Long did I know that you would seek me out. But early, you are. Many years still I expected to have before you would come. Now events have changed, and what that means, I know not."

"So you won't come with us?"

"Come with you? What have I to offer? Lost my light saber, I have. My connection to the force has grown weak, much like I have. All I can offer you is training, and hesitant, I am. Much growing you have to do, if you do not wish to fall to the dark side. Time you need, time we do not have now, to mature, to learn control."

"Oh, come on, forget all this light side, dark side stuff." Lysanias told him. "It's nonsense. You do with your abilities who you are when you start. They don't change you. If you're a good person to start you do good things. If you're a bad person you do bad things. If some go bad, okay, fine. There was this guy we met right after I came here. Han Solo, right, I briefly mentioned him. Han was ready to shoot some green dude dead in full view of everyone in a bar. He later had no hesitation or remorse killing a couple of men on duty in the Death Star. I stopped him. And let's talk the Death Star for a moment. A couple of switches thrown, and a planet is destroyed. Can a couple of people that might learn to lift half a pound in a month's worth of training really be that dangerous? How are those people not "dark side?" Just because they didn't use the force doesn't mean the lives they took, or would have taken, were any less tragic to lose. Luke is right, we need you. Not just to train him, but any others we find that can use the force. We had a small school going, and I think that should continue. You were willing, right Ashoka?"

She nodded. "I think people that can use the force should be able to get training, yes. Better than letting them accidentally use their powers in rage and cause more trouble. I don't think it should be *Jedi* training specifically, but some kind of class should be available."

"Well said. You can be a part of it, or we can leave you to this place, alone, and apart. That doesn't help anybody."

"If not Jedi, then what, hum?" Yoda asked. "You would train Sith?"

"No, I would train *people*. Forget the labels. I mean let's take a look at the Jedi for a second. Ahsoka told me about your 'recruitment' methods. You stole *babies* from *mothers* and started indoctrinating them from the time they could talk. You stood apart from everyone instead of standing beside everyone. Anyone that worked for the organization was a Jedi, a sure way to make sure it fell. No diversity. No divergent thoughts. If you were really serious about keeping peace in the galaxy, the 'Jedi' would have been an organization anyone could join. You've given training, a badge, and you act as a peacekeeper. If you can use the force, great, you get the harder missions. But nobody is turned away. That way your ranks are huge and spread everywhere, rather

than being small and concentrated in one place. How much harder would it have been for the Jedi to be destroyed in that case?"

"Yeah, the baby thing turned me off the group," Jenny agreed. "I mean, really? And the way the Jedi treated Ahsoka, it's shameful!"

"Necessary, we believed it to be."

"I doubt it won you any friends. And these so called 'sith' could justifiably point to that practice and say 'at least we don't do that.'"

"Much have I thought about these things," Yoda admitted, looking down. "No easy answers have I discovered."

"Well, you discovered what didn't work," Luke reminded him. "So this time, try something else. Come with us, train me, help us, and then let's begin a new kind of Jedi organization. One that's not force focused, but people focused. That has oversight, that doesn't do questionable things like stealing babies. That's better than the old one."

*Huh. Sometimes his whining can be put to a positive use after all.*

"Possible, this is?"

"So sure are you that it is not?" he shot back.

Yoda chuckled. "Said well, that was. Perhaps taught, you can be. Very well. Planets are dying, discover who is behind it we must. Come with you, I will."

"Thank you, master," Ahsoka beamed. "Come on, we'll help you carry any belongs, my ship is right over there."

"Of belongings I have few," he explained. "And do without them I can. Come, to your ship we will go at once."

So the group headed back to the ship and blasted off, leaving only one question now: *Where to go to find and stop the Death Star.*

## Chapter 18

Never Tell me the Odds

When: Just after takeoff

Where: The "main" room of the ship

Yoda looked around as Ahsoka got ready to lift off, then lowered himself to the floor like space travel weren't no thing. "Close quarters these are," he remarked. "Careful not to get on each other's nerves we must be. Though small I am, know I am here you will not."

Lysanias resisted the urge to smack his head on the wall, but everyone noticed him mentally beating himself up.

"What's up?" Jenny asked. "Don't tell me you have some power that could have made the ship seem bigger?"

"Just the fact that I could have opened a doorway at any time into my personal dimension which has all the space we could ever want. I'm so *stupid* sometimes!"

"Personal dimension?"

*No, no, don't all protest my statement at once.* "Sort of like the sub-space pocket, but created with magic. I was shrinking you guys down when I could have just let you practice in there and use your real light sabers. Well, it's two weeks back so—"

"Wait, are we just going back?" Luke asked. "We have to get on the trail of the Death Star, stop it blowing up planets! Get in front of it, not chase it across the universe."

"Good point. I suppose I could ask where we might find it, and we can just go there directly."

"With just the five of us?" Jenny asked. "No offense, but you'll have had a month of training at best, and Yoda here has already admitted to being too old to fight. That leaves us with three fighters to breach the Death Star's defenses and get to whoever the avatar is."

"So? We did it before. Okay, the fleet was a distraction for us teleporting there and we had the spirit's help but we could just plaster this ship in 'ignore me' wards and fly close to it, matching the speed. We've got the time for Lysanias to make wards, and he's usually doing that anyway."

"Problem is, this time the avatar is in control. They know what we can do, and they'll have prepared accordingly!"

"I suppose you're right."

"I would like a heading though," Ahsoka called to them as the ship rose into the air. "So where are we going, oh fearless leader?"

"I'm no leader!"

"You are now!"

"I see. Let me think a minute."

"What about that Vader character?" Jenny asked. "Or the emperor? Aren't they supposed to be fairly powerful? I wouldn't mind another force user on my side in this fight."

"Much evil has Vader done," Yoda cautioned. "But powerful with the force, I admit he is."

"How do we know he isn't the avatar now?" Luke asked. "You said you forgot to check him out when you were rescuing Obi-Wan that one time."

"He didn't check but I did," Jenny protested. "Remember? He's not the one. Now the emperor, he's still on the list. But they'll probably travel together, meaning if we see Vader, we can probably check if the emperor is fairly soon after. But there's still the possibility the emperor is on the station and directing the attack."

"He wasn't there before, you think he would have been if he was the avatar. We wouldn't have snatched it away so easily."

"Exactly. So I think the chances are pretty low. But we can get more information

all the same. You can ask where the Death Star is, and you can ask where Vader is. If they aren't the same place, the emperor is probably with Vader and not the Death Star. Or if you can't get an answer to where the emperor is, maybe he is the avatar."

"Oh. That's fairly clever," Lysanias admitted. "Asking after the avatar directly hasn't gotten me very far but asking after the huge station moving about the universe might be fine."

"Wait, you aren't seriously thinking about asking Darth Vader to join us?" Ahsoka asked them, coming back to where they were sitting. "Do you know the horrible things he's done?"

"No, I don't," Lysanias admitted. "But consider this. Because he isn't the avatar, you're on the same side. I'm sure he doesn't want this reality destroyed any more than you do. For the moment that's the overriding concern. Getting the strongest people we can together to defeat your mutual foe."

"Pointless it is, to argue who is the avatar or not. Not when the question must simply be asked."

"Good point. Let me ask, we don't need to fly off this second, do we?"

"No," Ahsoka admitted. "We can wait."

"Then give me a little while and I'll have more information. I'll go to the cockpit, it's quieter."

"Fine."

So Lysanias headed back there and settled into the chair. *So how do I ask this question? Where it is? But it's probably in hyperspace at the moment. Where it will exit hyperspace? That's probably the system with the next planet it'll destroy. Man, I really screwed this one up, didn't I? But what could I have done differently? Could the avatar have been the one pushing for this Death Star all along? As a vehicle for destroying this reality? Was there more I could have done? Argued for blowing it up once everyone was off it? I didn't want the millions of people to die, but I shouldn't have let something so powerful continue to exist. The loss of those worlds is on my hands. At least started them dismantling the weapons, but didn't Leah say they were integral to the operation of the station? I just went along with it, but now that I think about it, why did I believe her? How does she know anything about construction of space stations? But she told me to forget it, and I did. I didn't bring it up again, just let it sit there out in space. What was wrong with me? A pretty girl bats her eyelashes at me and I just accept it? He started quickly blinking his eyes. Okay, that's really annoying actually. Have I ever really seen someone do that? And now I'm way off track. I need to make it up to this universe and put a stop to the avatar quickly before more people are killed. So I guess the question I'll ask the universe is this: What solar system will the space station we call the Death Star strike next?*

*Thesme*

*Okay, got an answer, good. Now, in what solar system will the man called Darth Vader be when the space station we call the Death Star strikes Thesme? No, wait, he could be traveling at that time. I'll rephrase the question. What solar system will the man named Darth Vader be nearest when the space station we call the Death Star strikes Thesme?*

*Corsin*

*And there we have it.*

"How close are Corsin and Thesme?" he asked, emerging from the front.

"I'd have to look, give me a second," Ahsoka told him, moving past and firing up

the navigational computer. "About 3000 parsecs apart," she answered.

"Is that a lot?"

"Let's just say it would take light about 10,000 years to go that distance."

"Okay, I guess that's... wait, how fast does light go?"

"It's the fastest thing there is. We only move faster by... uh... the engine... does... a thing. I have no idea, I just push the buttons on the ship! I'm not a hyperspace engine builder!"

"Fair enough," Lysanias put his hands up. "It's pretty far then. Well, that's where Vader will be when the next attack happens."

"That's still fairly close to Yavin," she mused. "It'll take us a while to get back into that area."

"Meanwhile more planets will be blown up," Luke unnecessarily reminded them.

"If I could magically snap my fingers and make my engine better, I would!"

Ahsoka told him. "But the laws of physics are all I've got. I'll get the course programmed."

"Wait, I can still ask one thing," Lysanias told her. "If it makes a difference. I can ask where Darth Vader will be say ten days from now. We can head there, rather than heading to where he'll be tomorrow and then having to chase after him."

"That makes sense. Wait, what am I saying? You're really going to try and, what, recruit him? He's evil!"

"Of course. When I stood face to helmet with the man he didn't take hostages, or try other tricks to try and get me to surrender. He looked the situation over, decided he was outmatched, and withdrew. You don't have to like or trust the guy, but he has been around. As far as him being 'evil' I haven't heard his side of the story, or really what he's accused of doing. Positively, he has the command of a space fleet. He can use the force. He's not a droid, told to simply murder everyone around him. He's not just going to attack you like a rabid animal. He'll listen to what we have to say, and make his choice."

"Master Yoda, are you going to along with this? You know what Vader has done!"

"An observer in all this, I am. While forgiveness I can never offer the man Anakin became, few we are. Oversaw construction of this Death Star, he no doubt did. Perhaps redemption he can seek by stopping it now."

"He betrayed us all! Betrayed everything!"

"Better than you do I know what Vader has done. But perhaps the price this was for our arrogance. The force moves all things, even him, and perhaps his part is not yet done. Ahsoka, your anger towards Vader I feel. But remember this, you must; the dark side anger is. You must let go your anger, or be consumed by it."

"I will try to remember that. But if we weren't in such awful trouble..." She let the threat hang in the air.

"I know," Lysanias assured her. "Now hang on a moment or ten and I'll see what other answers I can get us."

"Fine."

So he went back into the quieter room and composed a new question for the universe.

*Where can we most easily intercept the man called Darth Vader?*

The universe had no answer, and Lysanias sighed and steeled himself for another ten minutes of sitting around waiting for the knowledge of the cosmos to present itself. *Though I suppose getting an answer back in any time at all is still pretty amazing. I have to think of some way to practice or get training in this skill. Amy could sit around her pond all day asking the universe stuff, I don't have that luxury. Well, okay, I do when we're traveling but I need to make stuff, too. Anyway, to what system should we head to have the best chance at speaking to the man called Darth Vader?*

The universe had no answer.

“You fall asleep in there?” asked Luke, poking his head in.

“No. Sometimes I don’t get an answer as easily! It happens when it happens!”

“Just making sure. Take your time, no rush.” His tone clearly indicated there was a rush, and that somehow he would do a better job of extracting information out of the wisdom of the cosmos.

With the door closed again Lysanias took a deep breath and then his shoulders slumped. *Right, synergy or whatever. Using the abilities I have together, and all that. I’m such an idiot.*

With that, he chanted for a few moments until he felt the spirit of the dragonfly was with him, and tried again. *Should have done that in the first place.*

*What planetary system should we seek to most easily recruit the man named Darth Vader?*

*Geris*

*Thank you! Was that so much to ask? Wait, forget I asked that.*

“Apparently we need to head to Geris, hopefully you know of it?” he asked, coming back to the main area.

“I’m sure my computer does,” Ahsoka told him. “Hang on.” She went to program their course, and Lysanias now got busy shaping magical energy into the gateway to his personal dimension. With the sword at his side he discovered it was fairly easy to shape the magic, but still didn’t take a chance on shortening the spell to less than 9 minutes. Luke and Yoda went in there to discuss the force, leaving Jenny and Lysanias more room to practice chi-blocking.

The days then passed on their way back towards the neighborhood of Yavin, and planetary destruction continued. It seemed about one every day was destroyed, as though the Death Star simply picked the next closest world, went there, blew it up, and repeated the procedure. Lysanias became more and more distracted with every world that died, still believing all the lives lost were somehow his fault. Jenny tried to keep his spirits up, telling him it was madness to go around trying to sense everyone in the universe to see if they were the shadow avatar.

“Think of it this way,” she explained. “If you weren’t around to warn them, whatever would have happened to put the Death Star into the hands of the shadow avatar would have happened. Those lives would still have been lost. At least this way you’re rushing to do something about it. This reality has a chance because you’re on the case. Countless trillions will *live* because you did something about it. Are the lives that have been lost tragic? Sure, there’s no question of that. But do those people live on in a nearby reality? Yes, yes they do.”

“Wait, what? Say that again?”

“Didn’t Inari explain this? There’s countless realities connected to this one. But the reason you’re here and not there is for the same reason the shadow avatar is here and not there. This one is the main ‘branch’ if you will. Cut this one, and all similar ones connected to it fall. But save this one, and the rest are safe too.”

“But that means if this one falls, all the countless versions of all the countless people connected to this reality go too!”

“Ah. I see she *didn’t* explain all this. Maybe she just thought you knew?”

“No, I didn’t.” He paused, thinking this over. “Way to put the pressure on though, thanks.” He slumped more, now realizing she probably hadn’t told him for this very

reason. That maybe what he didn't know wouldn't hurt him.

"Sorry, I thought I was helping."

"I think we're using different meanings of that word."

"You really don't feel better, knowing that those lives that have been lost are not truly lost? Each of those people on those planets aren't dead, just a little less probable to find in any one reality."

"I'm sure that's a great comfort to them."

"It would be to me. I've never found another Jenny running around. There seems to be only one of me. So if I go, that's it, no more Jenny Everywhere. At least some part of everyone here will carry on."

*So wait, is there a version of me that wasn't rescued by Don and Everest? Who is still sleeping in that cave? Or who was rescued by dark elves? Or killed in a cave in? Huh. So out of all the versions of me that exist, I was the one that got picked to do this? I'm not sure how I feel about that.* "But wait, realities are so diverse. At least the three I've been in, which I admit isn't many. How can those people live where there aren't even those planets, or the technology to get them there?"

Jenny shook her head. "It's complicated. Just because all realities ultimately can be traced back to one 'trunk' if you will, each 'branch' that supports each set of 'leaves' is basically doing what all life does. Try to attain the form that will allow it to last the longest in whatever environment that life finds itself in. So naturally that 'deeper' reality tries magic here, technology there, a bit of both over here. The longer the inhabitants of each live, the better off life is. With different rates of time between realities and like you said, different people meeting because they might not be able to get where they might meet someone else, over time populations are very different. But the spirit of those people can always be found if you look closely enough."

"I suppose. In all three realities were strong people, willing to step up and put the needs of others above their own. Small groups fighting larger ones. Empires coming together to try and control things, individuals not wanting to be controlled."

"Exactly. There's more similarities than you think, even if the names and the faces are a little different."

"I guess. Thanks."

"Don't want you thinking it's pointless to try and save as many as you can. Now come on, take me through the strike points again."

"Okay, on the arm there's three you have to hit, here, here, and here..."

"Jinkies!" Jenny said, looking out the window at the number of ships in the Geris system the group dropped into. Yoda and Luke were there, so everyone was squashed into the cockpit as they arrived.

"You said it," Ahsoka agreed, eyes darting about the area. It was hard to tell how far away they were and the scale of each ship, but Lysanias figured there were some big ones floating around.

"We're getting a signal, I'll bring it up."

"Attention all incoming ships," said a man in a gray uniform, appearing before them. "This area is off limits without official imperial codes. You will be given an appropriate interval to calculate your jump out of this system. If you do not immediately depart after that *reasonable* interval you will be fired upon and destroyed. No further warnings will be given. Good day."

"That doesn't seem very nice," Jenny told him.

"Attention all incoming ships," said a man in a gray uniform. "This area is off limits-"

"It's a recording," Ahsoka told them, switching it off. "So now what?"

"The direct way," Yoda told her. "Information we have, and this many ships to me says fear. Let us lessen that fear for those nearby."

"I guess they can only blow us up once. Attention, imperial fleet," she broadcast.

"I am Ahsoka Tano. With me is master Yoda. I have vital information relating to the Death Star and will speak to Darth Vader who I know is in the area. He will know our names and wish to speak to us. You will respond and allow me to speak to him."

"Forceful," Luke remarked, after she hit the button to stop broadcasting.

"They're trained to follow orders. If you want results, give them some orders to follow."

A tense moment passed.

"Unidentified ship," suddenly rang from the speakers. "Please repeat your message?"

"You are not Darth Vader," Ahsoka told him. "That is the only person I will speak to."

"You *want* to reach Darth Vader?"

"That's correct. You are here because of the Death Star, are you not?"

"That's a military matter! How do you even know about that?"

"Know many things, we do," Yoda told him. "To your master we must speak."

The man's gaze fell to Yoda, and his eyes got a little wider. But he shook his head and stood up straight again. "Very well, it's your head if he doesn't like what you have to say. He's been summoned, but says if you want to talk to him, you'll have to come aboard. I'm sending landing coordinates to your ship now."

"Very well, we'll dock shortly."

"See that you do." He vanished. "He does not like to be kept waiting."

*Wait, we came to him!*

"We will?" squeaked Luke. "Dock, I mean?"

"In for a solar mass, in for a black hole," she said cryptically. "We got their attention, isn't that what we wanted? I just hope you know what you're doing," she told Lysanias with a glare.

*So I do.*

Moments later the ship pulled into a bay and landed, and the group emerged to a line of troops not exactly pointing guns in their direction, but they were close at hand just the same. Out from the back swept the darkened form of Vader, breathing heavily and having people snap to attention as he passed. He stopped in front of them, and Lysanias could see Ahsoka's hands trying not to snatch her two light sabers from her belt.

"Good to see you again, Snips," said the menacing voice of Darth Vader.

"Anakin Skywalker," she snarled. "We meet again."

"WHAT?" shouted Luke.

Chapter 19  
As Father and Son  
When: A moment later  
Where: Darth Vader's current ship

"What did you call him?" Luke demanded.  
"I called him his name. And don't call me Snips. You lost that right a long time ago."  
"Very well, *Ahsoka*," Vader agreed. "But if I may, how did you escape that temple during our last duel?"  
"I might very well ask you the same. I see collapsing a temple on top of you didn't kill you. I'll have to do a better job next time."  
"Now, now, let's be civil," he cautioned.  
"Are you saying he's my father?" Luke went on.  
"No, I'm your mother. My goodness you're slow, you still hadn't figured it out, then?"  
"Yoda?"  
"Your father, he is," Yoda agreed. "Hiding it now, little point there would be."  
"But Obi-Wan said... oh, but then you said... and the light saber, that was..."  
"Why don't we just give him a moment? Come, let us at least sit at a conference table instead of standing around here near the airlock. Thing always creeps me out, just an energy field between me and the vacuum of space. I think we have much to discuss."  
"Fine. Lead the way," Ahsoka told him.  
"Did you know he was my father?" Luke whispered to Lysanias as they walked. People were very quick to get out of the way, and looked relieved when he had passed. Lysanias didn't know if the place was a buzz of activity or not, but everyone looked like they had stuff to do, and were not dawdling to get it done.  
"I didn't see him showing off your baby pictures, if that's what you're asking," he replied dryly. "But it was fairly obvious based on what Obi-Wan and he said the last time we met."  
"More obvious to some, I guess," he pouted.

The room they entered was basically metal walls, and a table with some chairs around it, which Vader motioned them to sit at. He himself took the chair at the end.  
"Now then, Yoda I of course recognize. But you," he pointed to Lysanias, "interest me most of all. I told the emperor of your words when last we met, and he's been trying to find out about you ever since. It turns out there isn't much to know, like you just came into existence not long ago. But you don't look like a toddler, so who are you?"  
"That's unimportant," Ahsoka told him, as Lysanias started to answer. "What is important is, who is right now in control of the Death Star? Who keeps destroying planets? And how are you going to stop them?"  
"So you really don't know?" Vader asked. "Weren't you the ones that had it last? Careless of you to lose it like that, when you think about it."  
"We were away, picking up Yoda. We figured your forces had taken it over again. At least as first. Then we discovered you weren't there, so probably not. Turns out we were right."  
He shook his head. "If it were the case it was under our control, why would planets controlled by the empire fall just as easily as those planets not aligned to us?"  
"I'm surprised there are any left," she quipped.  
"We can't control every planet."  
"Don't sound so down about it. Besides, we just felt the planets being destroyed, not what planets or who they belonged to."  
"Of course. And I'm not 'down' about it, I'm just stating a fact. The fact is we don't

have enough manpower to fully control every planet. Some we see no reason to control, because they don't have enough resources to be useful. Or they're too primitive to have space travel, or they have enough defenses it isn't worth it. There's a lot of reasons."

"But that doesn't matter to whoever is running the Death Star now?"

"Apparently not. Let me show you something." He gestured, and a star map appeared from the table. "This is the route we've been able to piece together, starting with Yavin which we assume was the location of your hidden rebel base?"

"No sense hiding it now. It was."

"So your rebellion is no more, or at least a good portion of it that was there. Interesting. I felt a strange pull to go there, and the emperor did as well. Glad we didn't. Strange how that happened, isn't it?"

"I felt the same pull, as did three of your *inquisitors*." She looked like she was eating something sour when she said that. "So your side didn't completely escape harm."

He shrugged. "Still, it was three of our side to how many of yours? Seems like a fair trade to me, seeing how *you* lost control of the station."

"Me?!"

"Well, maybe not you personally. It puzzled us, when reports of planets being blown up started to trickle in. We didn't think your rebellion would have the stomach for it. Of course, the emperor and I felt it before then, but we couldn't believe it. Someone was using our weapon against us, but blowing up rebel worlds too. That really didn't make sense to us. There seemed to be no pattern to it, just world after world being destroyed."

"Whoever is controlling it, they just want to see life extinguished," Jenny explained. "It has different names, but every place it goes is the same. Death to all."

"I see. That does explain the behavior, if some third party got ahold of it. And here you all are, claiming your base destroyed and needing our help. If it's a trick it's a very strange one. So, if you know what we're dealing with, how do we stop it?"

"It works through possession. We get aboard the station, and we kill the host. That's the end of it."

He pressed his palms together. "Then we get our station back. Excellent plan."

"Uh, no, we get *our* station back." Ahsoka countered. "The rebel alliance stole it fair and square."

"And then lost it again."

"That's not the point. If this other thing hadn't come along we never would have lost it."

*If the shadow avatar hadn't existed, I wouldn't have come along to drive it off. So you would never have gotten it. In fact you wouldn't be here at all.*

"Still. We blew up one planet to demonstrate it, how many have been destroyed since you stole it? And who would man it? Is the rebellion even still on? How many forces *do* you have left?"

The group traded a look. "We don't actually know," Luke admitted. "We aren't in contact with any, we came straight here."

"And we weren't privy to that sort of information," Ahsoka told him. "I don't know how many cells are left, or what equipment they might have, or where they might be. I didn't need to know."

"Yes, yes, that's terrorist strategy 101, no need to explain it. That's why you came here. You want to clear your conscience for letting someone take over the station and start wreaking havoc, and we're the only ones with the firepower necessary. We were the ones you could find."

"I suppose if you want to put it that way," Ahsoka admitted.

*I suppose I could have asked about other rebels, but honestly, going to the people that built the darn thing makes the most sense. They would know best how to defend against it, if that's possible, plus any weak points.*

"But how many of *my* troops are now going to perish trying to retake *our* station?"

"We haven't discussed a plan, we needed to be sure you would be willing to help us," she admitted.

"You mean 'I beg of you to help us stop this madness before it's too late!' right?"

"Come off it, Anakin. Are you going to help us or not?"

"I suppose no matter who asks us, we do need to get the station under control. With or without your help. We can't keep losing planets like this. I'm not sure I'm buying this 'possession' business, I'm going to need a lot more than what you've told me thus far about what happened after I left the station. But not just yet. I've signaled the emperor, he'll want to hear it too. He should be along in just a moment."

"Wow, the emperor," Ahsoka said sarcastically. "And I left my autograph book back in the ship."

"Maybe you could ask him to sign your chest, and just take a picture later?" Vader suggested.

"Are you... cracking jokes?"

"Why shouldn't I? Seeing you again makes me feel young. Like having lungs that worked. We had some good times, didn't we?"

Lysanias felt a strange mix of emotions coming from Anakin. Sorrow, regret, even a yearning to reconnect to someone from his past.

*What happened to him? After the Jedi order fell and he joined the Empire, it must have been a lonely time for him. Trapped in that suit of his, which must be keeping him alive? I hear it breathing for him, that must be the lung damage he was talking about. His spiritual energy is sort of messed up, and I saw the way the people in the hall looked at him. Does he have even a single friend left? Perhaps Ahsoka here is the only one from his past he's seen in a long time. It's no wonder he would want to reconnect with her.*

"Those times could have continued. You made your choice."

"If I hadn't chosen as I did, wouldn't I have just been killed along with the rest? The Jedi order would have fallen with or without me, you must realize that by now. I did what I thought was right, at the time. Are you saying I'm not allowed to regret it, having lived with my... mistakes since then?"

"Wha-"

At that moment the door opened and a very messed up looking old man shuffled into the room. He was flanked by guards in special armor, and Vader rose smoothly and went down to one knee. "Please, sit my master."

"I'm not an invalid you know," he croaked. But he took the seat anyway. Vader rose and stood behind him. "So, this is the one I've had so much trouble seeing," he stated. "Perhaps I couldn't see through that beard of his. Vader, why don't you grow a beard?"

"I could put a fake one on over the mask if that would please you, master."

"Er..." Lysanias wasn't sure what he should be expecting, but banter probably wasn't it.

"Well, speak up. You may call me The Supreme Ruler of the Galaxy may he Rein Forever, but what shall I call you?"

"I'm calling you buttface," Jenny decided, raising a hand. "The Supreme Buttface."

"Oh no, my butt is untouched by the force lighting that caused all this," the emperor assured her. "Would you like to see?" He started to rise, a wide grin on his face as he reached down to take his pants off.

"No, that's okay!" Jenny hastily assured him, covering her eyes.

"Ah, but I feel a little bit of curiosity from you, don't I?" His hands hovered. "Are you sure? Last chance!"

"I don't think so!"

"Pity." He sank back down. "You were saying?"

"I'm Lysanias, traveler from another reality."

"As is our current foe, I heard. Well, now that we're all friends here—"

Ahsoka snorted.

"—we can get on with it. Convince me why I should support your efforts to retake my station."

"I would think a malevolent force bent on your destruction would be convincing enough. But I'll see what I can do. You're not exactly what I pictured."

"Oh, Ahsoka and the others have been telling you the horrible things we've done, is that it?"

"And you haven't?"

"My good man, the empire has done nothing but good in the universe since it was created. And continues to do so, if I might add."

"Ha. HAHA. ha. Stop, you're killing me," Ahsoka deadpanned. The emperor looked over at her. "Oh, no, sorry, supreme ruler, etc. Please, wax philosophical about all the 'good' the empire has done. I'd be *very* interested to hear it!"

"Of course my dear. Hundreds of planets have been lifted from poverty by us. Disaster relief efforts across the galaxy all organized by the empire. Safe space lanes free of pirates. Scientists working to improve our quality of life. Abundant resources moved from where they can do little good to where they can do the most good. Soldiers keeping peace in cities, maintaining laws. And that's not even mentioning the hospitals, schools, parks all maintained through the efforts of the empire. And the millions we employ, bettering their lives, what about them? We don't use clones anymore, we use 'real' people with real lives. Families, dreaming of a better life, and we the empire make those dreams come true. I bet even this young lad here, Luke something your name is, right? Starkiller?"

"Skywalker."

"Oh yes, of course, you're the son of Anakin here, slipped my mind. I bet even you one day dreamed of attending the imperial academy to learn to become a pilot, isn't that right?"

Everyone turned to him. "Yeah," he reluctantly admitted.

"So you see? Good done across the universe."

"And all it cost was democracy. Personal freedom," Ahsoka argued.

"Naturally!" the emperor agreed. "Why, that way lies chaos. You think a lawless society would be any better? We're the middle ground between that and democracy. And let me tell you about democracy. Back when we had hundreds of member worlds in the senate *nothing* got done! I mean, even here— let me give you an example. I, for one, could go for some Vasusian entrées for lunch. Anakin, what about you?"

"Vasusian? You know how gassy I get after I eat that stuff. What about pizza?"

"I'm vegan," one of the guards spoke up. "If we get pizza can you make sure the milk used to make the cheese was ethically collected?"

"Oh goodness, I forgot about that guy," the emperor groused. "Oh, was this a sentient species? Did they agree to be chopped up and grilled?"

"Hey, my life choices are my own!"

"I'm lactose intolerant," said another. "We can't have pizza unless the cheese is soy cheese. What about just some sandwiches?"

"I hate sandwiches," Luke told them. "And I absolutely insist on getting blue milk to drink!"

"You see?" The emperor threw his hands up. "We've already almost come to blows just over what to order for lunch! How well do you think a bunch of petty minded, squabbling, back stabbing, *children* pretending to be diplomats got anything done?"

"Not well?" he guessed. "Were they literally children?"

"Depends on who you compare them to. Yoda here must be, what, nearly nine hundred or so, right?"

"Correct, you are," he agreed.

"He would have seen anyone under five hundred as an unruly child. Unfit to make decisions that impacted entire solar systems. I mean some species only live a handful of years."

"So you think they never could have adequately governed themselves?"

"Exactly. Far better to have a strong leader that simply makes the decisions. No squabbling, no bickering. Efficient and fast. That's what you need to keep an entire galaxy running smoothly."

"That's revisionist history!" Ahsoka protested.

"Look, I'm not here to debate your political systems," Lysanias assured him. "I just want to stop the shadow avatar and be on my way."

"I see." The emperor seemed disappointed.

"You wanted validation," Ahsoka decided with a gasp. "You wanted someone from outside this reality to look at what you had done and say, yeah, that's probably for the best. Didn't you? Admit it!"

"That could be part of it. But come, you were about to convince me to throw my forces into battle."

"Actually, that may not be necessary. We really just came to see if Anakin or Vader or whatever his real name is would be willing to join us. We're going to try sneaking back on the station like we did before and confront the avatar directly. Then you all can debate what to do with the station."

"You can't seriously think I'd just hand it back to them," Ahsoka told them.

"The alternative is blowing the thing up, what I argued against in the first place. The loss of resources and life would be staggering."

"Blow it up?" the emperor asked, straitening up. "Do you know how much that thing *cost*? The loss of that station would be a huge economic blow for us."

"Good!" she replied smugly.

"In any case, I'm sure the emperor here now realizes it was a dumb idea to build something that can be easily stolen and used against him, and will disable the weapon and simply use it as a way to move a tremendous number of people around. Heck, if he's as 'humanitarian' as he claims, planetary disaster would make it the perfect vehicle. If you needed to evacuate a small moon, and do it all at once, the Death Star or 'Peace Moon' as we called it, could be perfect."

"I can see some change coming," the emperor admitted. "And I can admit building it may not have been the best use of resources. But that's a debate for later, *after* we have it back under control. Don't you agree?" She grumbled something and crossed her arms, but didn't *disagree*. He smiled. "Very well. So convince me to let my pupil go, then."

"Very well."

So Lysanias gave a more brief explanation about what was going on, and did the now typical demonstration of things he could do that they couldn't, and the emperor seemed convinced.

"It seems your stories check out," he told them all.

"Wait, what?" Jenny asked.

"One of our probe droids came back with a message, not long before you arrived." He waved one of the guards over who crisply marched over, did a funny salute and bowed. "Play the message."

"Yes, emperor," said the guard, inserting something into the table. It lit up and showed a figure in an angular black helmet looking over their shoulder. They were dressed in black, like Vader, and it was impossible to tell if it was a man or woman because of the cape they had blocking the view of their body. A voice rang out, obviously electronically generated.

"Greeting, emperor," it began. "If my calculations are correct, very soon now you will be getting a visit by some very special people. They're going to tell you a story

about how I'm from another reality, and how I want the life force of this universe for myself. That story is true. I'm the one now in control of your Death Star. I think you recognize the bridge behind me?" The camera angle changed and yes, it was the bridge of the Death Star. Lysanias looked at the people still there, who seemed to be a bit glassy eyed. The camera came back and focused on the figure. "I think I've made my point. I can and will destroy every planet that harbors life, one at a time if I have to. It may take many human lifetimes, but I'm patient enough. It doesn't bother me."

*Wait, so does that mean the other realities I visited didn't have planets with life on them? The shadow avatar seemed only interested in the world we were on. Strange.*

"The people you are about to receive wish to stop me, as I'm sure you do as well, even given your limited knowledge of my actual plan up until now. Send them, along with anyone else that wishes to directly attack me. I'll include codes in this message they can transmit when they arrive so I know it's them. When they are dead there will be nothing that can stop my absorption of this reality's potential. Oh, and you're wondering if I won't just blow them up when they transmit the code so I know where they are?"

*Well I am now.*

"I admit, it's a valid concern. And if it was just Jenny, yes, I would destroy her without hesitation. In fact I'm a little miffed I didn't get her back at the rebel base. You squirmed out of it again, Everywhere." She stuck her tongue out at the figure. "But I have something to discuss with the other one. Lysanias, as I'm sure you're watching this, I have an offer for you. Two offers, actually. I've included my coordinates so you can find me. Don't keep me waiting." The image vanished.

"So you know where they are?" Lysanias asked.

"Indeed. The coordinates won't take long to reach. Will you sneak in as you originally planned, or transmit the code and see if you're welcomed?"

"We're doing both," Ahsoka decided. "If you can spare a probe we'll launch it when we arrive. It can send the signal when we're far enough away. If it gets blasted, we'll know the shadow avatar was lying. If not, we'll go in and see what it has to say. What does it have to say, do you think? Why not just blow us out of the sky?" She looked at Jenny and Lysanias.

"Probably some kind of fool's bargain," Jenny answered. "Join them, rebel against Inari and Silverstreak and this reality will be spared, that sort of thing. It asks me every once in a while, but I always turn them down."

"As I will," Lysanias assured them.

"Usually when it feels it has the weaker hand, while here it has the whole Death Star. It's strange, but I never know what it has cooked up until after. It likes to try a lot of things, see what works best."

"This is my reality too," Vader told them. "Ahsoka, if you can stand to work with me one more time, I will stand at your side and defend you, just like in the old days."

"It's what we came here for," she admitted. "Just don't get in my way. I would hate to lose control of one of my sabers and slice you in half by accident."

"I'll keep that in mind."

"Then it's decided," the emperor announced. "Good luck, of all you."

The ship prepped with a droid they could launch, Ahsoka looked the coordinates and codes over. Vader was standing in the living area, looking around, while Yoda and Luke kept an eye on him. Ahsoka had asked Jenny and Lysanias to the cockpit, and they had squeezed inside.

"How do we know this code is real?" she asked. "That the message wasn't faked and they've made a deal? The emperor gets to leave the reality in exchange for helping the avatar?"

"Because he sent Vader with us," Jenny answered as if it was obvious. "Would he throw the only force user he has left at his side to the space wolves?"

She considered. "If that was the condition he gets out alive, I could see him

taking that deal.”

“But why would he go after Mr. Wrinkles there, instead of the dread lord Vader? Would he really want to add a guy who can barely walk to his forces? I don’t think so.”

“You would know better than us. Either way, at least we’ll have three competent force users now instead of just two. Jenny I know can handle herself, and she’s got a variety of weapons so that just leaves Yoda and Luke. A Jedi master that’s, and I don’t mean to disrespect the man in any way, already admitted he’s not at his peak anymore. And a kid with barely a month of training. Are we sure about those two? We could leave them someplace before we get to the coordinates.”

“I can do the same thing as before, enhance their connection to the force with magic,” Lysanias told her. “I wouldn’t put them in front-”

“Except as a meat shield,” Jenny said with a giggle.

“-but they can support us from behind.”

“I suppose, and we’re all we’ve got. Well, let’s go see who the person under the mask is.”

“Agreed,” they both said, and the ship blasted off and winked into hyperspace.

## Chapter 20

### It's a Trap!

When: Several hours later

Where: Near the Death Star's coordinates

Anakin had been telling Luke about his mother, and about how Jedi weren't supposed to fall in love. About how they had married in secret, and about how beautiful and brave she had been her whole life. He had also apologized for not being there, how Obi-Wan had hidden him away for some reason.

"And right under my nose," he had said when it was revealed he had been with family the whole time. "My own step-brother. Well, not exactly family but close enough."

"What happens now?" Luke had asked.

"I don't know," Anakin replied honestly. "You have some choices to make. I'm the only one that's been trained in both Jedi and Sith techniques. I could train you, guide you along the path between the dark and the light side of the force. Their way didn't work," he indicated Yoda, sitting as far away as he could on the other side of the ship, "but then again, look at what our side did. I can't say it worked either. But it wasn't always like that, there was a time people embraced both, because both are inside everyone."

"What about the empire?"

"What about it? No matter how it happened, we won. But only because some kind of great evil showed up. The emperor wants to rule planets, people. Not the empty void of space. Like he said, we get to be the saviors after these attacks. Those off the planets that were destroyed will need somewhere to go. Some way to rebuild their lives. We can offer them that. We know things like that exist now, just chasing off this one doesn't mean we're safe. And like Lysanias said, building weapons like the Death Star, that can be stolen and turned against you, probably isn't the best idea. Perhaps there's a better way, and we can find it together."

"I'd like that. Father."

"Me too, son. You can't actually tell, but I'm smiling under this mask."

"I can tell."

"If I had tear ducts I'd actually be tearing up a little."

"Perfectly reasonable."

"If my heart could beat on its own, it would swell with pride-"

"I get it dad, don't go overboard."

"Right son."

The system reached, Ahsoka's ship launched the probe droid and it relayed a tight beam signal back to them. When it was far enough away it transmitted the codes, and the Death Star signaled them back.

"Proceed along the following flight vector," an emotionless voice told them. "Our master is waiting for you."

"Oh, that doesn't sound good," Luke announced.

"For once I think you're right," Jenny agreed, checking her guns.

The ship slipped into the bay, where stood a single unarmed man. He was one of the rebels that had been charged with manning the station, and he patiently waited while they disembarked, weapons ready. Lysanias had the group warded up, and his mountain spirit was out and ready for action as well.

"Please come with me, I will take you to the command center," he said, sounding like he didn't care if they came or not. In fact, he simply turned and started walking, not even glancing behind him to see if they were following. The group shared a look but no hidden troops appeared to blast them. No droids unfolded themselves and began the attack. No poison gas choked them, nor did the shield keeping the vacuum at bay fail for even an instant, evacuating the atmosphere far more slowly than movies would have

you believe. (Because Science)

The group followed, and moved into the freight elevator, the only thing large enough to hold them all. Because they weren't going to be separated at this point.

Up and up they rode, and the elevator didn't fail and fall uncontrollably. No spikes shot out of the walls and ceiling to impale them. The wires in the walls didn't short out and electrocute the entire car, and everyone inside. No, they were safe, and after walking up several flights of stairs the doors to the main bridge opened, and the group stepped inside.

There, turned away from them, was the figure in black. The mask, just as in the message, covered the face of the person standing there. They looked over their shoulder.

"Well, my helmet just looks silly," Anakin remarked.

"Yes it does," intoned the figure, again the voice was electronically altered. "But my mask has a purpose. Do you want to know what it is?"

"Not especially," Lysanias told them.

The group crowded around, tense as the bridge crew turned to look at them. All of them had no expression on their faces, made no aggressive moves. That didn't reassure anyone. They stood at odd "standing desk" panels, circular controls set meters apart, so that each had a good view of the forward monitors.

"Too bad. I wear it because it's the helmet my son would have worn. The son I'll never have, because you, Lysanias, changed history."

"What?"

"That's right, you monster. I would have had a beautiful son, strong with the force. A fighter. Perhaps a bit of a temper, but I could deal with that. But no, you had to show up and drive the person away who would have given me my dear Ben Solo."

"No, it can't be. It can't be you! Take off that helmet and show us who you are!"

The figure paused dramatically. "What do you think you'll see if I do?"

"I'm not sure, but if it's who I think..."

"Poor fool. How many other unborn babies will never exist because of you, Lysanias? Because you ran around and poked your nose in?"

"I have to worry about the people alive *today*, not some mythical people that *could* exist."

"Well said. I told you I had two offers for you, would you like to hear them?"

"Kind of hard to hear anything, with that helmet on."

"Very well, I suppose it doesn't matter now." The front part slid without visible effort and the figure lifted it off her head.

"Leah?" everyone exclaimed.

"Hi again! Whew, stuffy in there." She tossed the helmet and it gently sailed away, coming to rest on a hatrack nearby.

"Strong with the force, she is," Yoda told them.

"Master of the obvious, this one is," she mocked. "Welcome to my station."

"Wait, it can't be you. I thought it would be Han, he was kill crazy. Or Anakin, or the emperor. Why did you take *her* over?"

"A couple of reasons," she explained, shaking her hair out. "Vader or the emperor were the obvious choices, of course. Predictable. I don't like predictable."

"So you took her?"

"An opportunity presented itself. The others were powerful, true, but I just needed a force user. They were too consistent for me to slip in, but Leah here," she ran her hands down her body, "she watched her world *burn*. As she did that, she changed, as I'm sure you can imagine. Sweet little Leah vowed revenge against all the people that had caused her world to die. And that's when I came knocking. She opened the door quite willingly for me. And then I went to work. Who do you think helped you get your message out to the stars? Me. Who do you think helped you contact that spirit? Me."

"So you could get the station."

"That's certainly part of it. But I wanted you to feel it, Lysanias. Feel that power of just walking around like nothing can touch you. I can give you that power. You think that spirit had a lot of energy? You felt it, I know you do. I can give you more. As much as you want, whenever you want it. And that's my first offer to you, wanderer. Join me. Hey Jenny, don't suppose you've changed your mind?"

"Not on your life."

"Pity. So how about it? How would you like to feel that way again?"

"Oh, I will," Lysanias assured her. "But I'm going to do it on my terms. One world at a time. One skill mastered at a time. I won't age, I won't get old and have to stop. I'm just going to keep traveling worlds, keep learning their techniques, and keep coming after you."

Leah sighed. "Taking the long way home, huh? We'll see if you're still singing the same tune a year or two from now. That's fine, the offer's always open if you change your mind. I've seen you in action, Lysanias, and I want your body."

Jenny started making a throwing up sound.

"And the rest of you, I mean I didn't mean it like that. Shut up, Jenny."

"Make me!"

"In a moment, in a moment. I still have to make my second pitch."

"Go ahead, this should be good."

"It is, I promise. That sword." She indicated the blade, held tightly in Lysanias' right hand, ready for action.

"Er, what about it?"

"It could become a real problem for me later on. Hand it over, and I'll walk."

"Wait, what? I give you this one admittedly rather nice sword, that I put a little time into making the sharpest thing around, and you'll release your claim on this reality?"

"That's the deal. Take it or leave it."

"A sword?" He looked to Jenny, who shrugged.

"You got me. Inari sent you to the last place specifically to get that blade, right?"

"Yeah, but it's just a sword."

"A sword I don't want you or anyone else anywhere near," Leah told him. She held a hand out. "Make up your mind."

"For an immortal being you're awfully impatient," Lysanias told her. "Jenny, think she'll keep her word?"

"I don't really know. Never made any deals with it. Usually just shot it."

"You'll just have to trust me. Tick Tock."

"If this blade scares you that much, I think I'll just hold onto it," he told her. "If you thought you could win you would just take it from my corpse."

She lowered her hand. "I don't *want* to kill you. Those that have traveled between realms are strong, and I could use strong people working for me. Many do, in fact. You're an asset, Lysanias, and I do believe in conserving my assets."

"Sorry. I'm only going to give it to you point first."

"Very well. I'll curse the waste but I'll cut you down just the same." She gestured and several objects started floating around her after detaching from her belt. "Everyone, get ready."

The bridge crew silently raised very odd looking guns, and Lysanias' eyes darted around.

"Those things are junk!" Jenny exclaimed, hardly able to believe what she was seeing.

"True, I had to prepare them in a short time, but unlike blaster fire, you light saber users won't be able to bounce back *slugs*." She snapped and the objects activated, showing themselves to be the spinning light sabers the inquisitors had used. Leah herself activated hers, and took her stance.

*You have got to be kidding me!*

"Take them out!" she said gaily, and the battle was on.

Lysanias, boosted by his items, acted first. He had been looking their combat area over, and noticed that Leah had three of the spinning sabers out and they were currently more to her right. This left her left open, but gave the man raising the gun a clear shot at them. The others would either have to try firing through the spinning blades or come off their platforms at the far end of the chamber. So he figured the unprotected man would be his first target. He struck out with the force, intending to yank the man's gun away before he could fire.

The gun flew from the man's hands.

Leah skipped forward, the three blades hovering near her tracking her movement, forcing Lysanias to block with his shield and parry her blade. He managed both, barely, and Leah smiled.

"What's the matter? Looks like blocking isn't a hundred percent successful, huh? That relies on your own skill. You almost got cut in half."

With a cry, Ahsoka lunged towards the front saber, intending to block with her first saber, then cut it in half when it stopped spinning with her second. She managed it, the saber either not under control enough or not programmed to dodge, the two blades slammed together and her other one sliced it through.

The spirit took the one on her left, simply grabbing the blade and smashing the grip with a fist, figuring it couldn't hurt them.

Yoda got the gun away from the guy on the left, sending it spinning away.

Lysanias was up again, and as his sword was currently holding off Leah's blade he tried to shield bash her, using the sharpened edge of the shield. She easily leapt back, out of reach.

Anakin got the gun away from the guy straight across the room.

Jenny had a clear shot with the sniper rifle she was carrying and tried to headshot Leah, but warned by the force she put a hand up and the bullet impacted nothing, exploding.

The goon still holding onto his gun didn't have a clear shot, his boss was in the way, but that didn't mean he couldn't do anything. He pressed a button on his control panel, which activated the 6 combat droids on the bridge, sliding open the panels on the walls and releasing them.

Goon three pulled a gun from under his station, and started taking aim again.

Lysanias swiped at the barrier, he could feel it there, but his blade bounced off.

"She's protected!" she shouted to the others.

"We have bigger problems!" Ahsoka told him, seeing the droids step out of the alcoves.

Goon 1 pulled a gun and brought it up.

The spirit turned and ran towards the closest droid, which of course couldn't see it coming. They weren't sure if just punching it would be enough, but the thing was clearly made of metal. So they punched it and metal bent it, putting a nice dent in the thing's chest. It was still moving though.

Lysanias figured it was pointless to attack the barrier, Leah couldn't get out of it without dropping it, so he turned his attention to the leftmost droid that was coming out. It was hardly any distance for him, given the speed he moved it, so he simply ran over there and tried cutting it in half. It hadn't been programmed to dodge, as who would be stupid enough to run up to it with a sword? It was cut in half in a shower of sparks.

The other droids now opened fire, luckily they were still equipped with blasters, not slug throwers, so the force users had a chance to block them, at least. All managed it, the one going for Anakin bouncing off the spirit it couldn't see, and registering an error code. Lysanias had to deal with two, but they fired one after another as the one further away got into position, so he was fine. He smashed a second droid, and Leah scowled.

Anakin finished off the nearest droid, the one the spirit was holding back, chopping it up as though needing to prove he still had it. He did.

Luke did nothing, because watching Lysanias chop droids apart like it was a day at the beach for him made him realize maybe he should stay out of the way for now. This was probably a smart move.

A droid fired at Anakin, who bounced the bolt back at him. It impacted the armor but didn't drop them.

The last gunless goon finally managed to get their second firearm out, and took aim.

The closer droid fired at Anakin, who again bounced it back. He got it in the left arm, which hardly registered for the thing.

Jenny had a clear shot at the guy who just pulled a gun so she shot him. In the leg. He cried out but didn't go down.

Yoda grabbed the nearest droid with the force, pulling them towards Anakin and spinning them around so they faced the other way. The spirit, figuring he could take care of that, went for the guy standing at the funny circular control panel before they shot anyone. They used metal bending to again disarm the man, who this time grabbed on with both hands and didn't let go.

Lysanias smashed the last droid on the left side, perfectly content to bash droids into scrap but feeling a little guilty about it. *After all, wasn't I the one that offered last rites to the droids that died in the attack when the empire was looking for R2-D2? Poor little guy, he'll never beep and boop again.*

Leah couldn't really physically act, but the force was her ally, and a powerful ally it was. "Luke," she shouted. "I'm your sister! These other people are your enemies! Help me destroy them!"

His head moved to the left, and suddenly he lunged, trying to cut Yoda down where he stood.

Yoda raised a hand and his light saber didn't descend. "Fight off her influence, you can," he called to Luke. "Enemies we are not!"

Ahsoka moved forward, stabbing her blades into the barrier, and trying to hold them there.

Lysanias turned to his right, looking at the man about to pull the trigger. *Oh no you don't.* He flipped one of the air grenades out of his sub-space pocket and tossed it in the air, then spirit stepped to the other side of the room, letting it trigger. It was between two of them so there was an explosion of air which boomed through the room, and both dropped. *I really hope I didn't just kill those two guys.*

The droid right next to Lysanias didn't how he had gotten there, but wasn't going to pass up the target. He opened fire, and thanks to the force Lysanias barely got his shield up in time.

*Not that my armor ward couldn't take it, but let's not need it to, right?*

The only other droid left swung his arms around, they didn't care which way they were facing, and fired at Anakin, who contemptuously bounced it back. "Trouble with droids is, they don't learn very fast," he remarked.

Jenny was still lined up, so she took another shot at the goon in front of her. His leg buckled, having been shot twice is no picnic.

The spirit and the goon went at the same time, firing at Anakin who was right there. It bounced off the spirit, who reached under the control panels and simply yanked the guy off his feet.

Leah looked at Ahsoka, who was trying to batter down the shield and she suddenly dropped both her sabers, crying out. It looked like she was in great pain, and her sabers winked out as they hit the floor.

"What are you doing to me?" she managed.

"You don't know the power of the dark side," Leah answered cryptically.

The droids were up again, but Lysanias had heard Ahsoka scream and felt her

pain. So he simply let his armor take the hit and smashed the thing apart. The other took more damage from the blaster bolt being reflected back, but was still standing.

"You know, usually these things aren't so durable," Anakin remarked curiously.

Luke struggled to kill Yoda, but still couldn't get his light saber into position.

"Luke, what are you doing?" Jenny asked, noticing this odd behavior.

"Clouded by the dark side, his mind is," Yoda told her. "Stop Leah, you must."

The spirit, now having the man on the floor, chi-blocked him into submission, and he never even knew what was going on. Not that he did anyway, but that's a different story.

Turning, Lysanias saw that the spirit was done taking care of the man, and released them. They vanished, and Leah looked over as if wondering what he was up to.

Anakin and the droid went at the same time, so he simply blocked the bolt and let the momentum carry him forward into position, chopping the droid in half at last. "And now for you, Leah."

Lysanias moved up to the shield around Leah, bumping into it and feeling along the edge.

"What are you doing?" she demanded.

"I think something can still get in. If it simply appears inside." *What do you say, spirit? Think it'll work?*

*I think it will.* The spirit appeared inside the barrier.

Jenny grabbed a boxy looking thing out of her sub-space pocket and pressed the trigger. A beam lanced out at Luke, who tried to intercept it with his light saber. This, however, wasn't something he could block so he went down, stunned.

"Gotcha," Leah said cryptically, and raised a hand. A spear of blackness appeared above it, and she threw it at the spirit, who was still getting their bearings after being summoned. It struck the spirit's head, making Lysanias cry out, but both were still up.

When Leah had thrown the bolt he felt the barrier go down and whipped his sword up to try and kill her. Amazingly, she blocked it.

"I guess person that can see the future beats sword with a 100% hit chance, huh?"

Ahsoka was blinking, the pain gone, so she willed her two hilts into her hands again and ignited them.

Suddenly the last spinning light saber decided it had a clear shot, and zoomed towards Lysanias. He managed to block it, stepping to the side and letting it spin past him.

Vader now force choked Leah, surprising her and distracting her which gave Ahsoka an opening. She darted forward, one saber making a brief contact before it was knocked away, and Leah tried to cry out.

Lysanias now had a clear shot as Leah's attention was on Ahsoka, and went for a killing blow, cutting her head off. But she just brought her saber behind her back, blocking the blow.

Jenny by this time had turned her attention to Leah and opened fire with the phaser, making her have to try and dodge out of the way. She didn't quite manage it, getting hit in the leg but only on stun. She was still up.

The spirit went to chi-block her but she just managed to get away from him.

But this just drove her closer to Ahsoka, who again lashed out with both blades. Again, she was deflected.

"Pin her down somehow!" she called.

"How about this?" Lysanias asked, targeting her saber with the force. It popped out of her hand but he had forgotten about the strap, so it didn't go sailing as he had wished. But at least he could try to keep it out of her reach.

Jenny phasered her again, but it went wide.

Anakin changed his tactic, trying to drive her down to the floor instead of just choking her, but she stayed up.

*Where is she getting the energy for all this? Was her claim to provide me all the energy I could possibly want actually genuine?*

The spirit didn't try anything fancy this time, simply trying to keep Leah off balance and let someone get another hit in. He struck out, but again missed. Lysanias' first instinct was to attack again, but then realized this wasn't working. Ahsoka was right there, about to strike again, so if he held off just two tenths of a second, they could come at her from two directions and maybe at least one of them would make contact. He hesitated, then brought his sword across while Ahsoka did the same from the other side. Throwing in all the energy he could into his strike she dodged Ahsoka but not him, and his blade tore her in half.

It took far longer for her to die than he expected, Leah just kept glaring at him, but finally the light went out of her eyes, and everyone there breathed a sigh of relief. Putting his sword up he checked the marble, which was now shining again.

"It's done," he announced. "Your reality is safe."

Lysanias let his spirit go and applied healing wards to his head, then the others in the room that had been wounded. Without Leah's influence they no longer wished to attack him, and Anakin went over to launch a hyperspace droid to inform the emperor the station was secured again.

"Sorry about trying to kill you," Luke apologized to Yoda. "I don't know what came over me."

"Leah used the force to influence your mind," Anakin told him. "And she shouted something about being your sister? Any comment, Yoda?"

"No comment you will have from me."

"I see. Doesn't matter anyway, she's dead. And what is your intention, oh traveler from beyond the stars?"

"I'm leaving," he announced. "This reality is safe, so the rest is up to you. But do train Luke, along with anyone else that wants it. Call it the dim side of the force, neither dark nor light. I think you might do a lot better."

"Perhaps. I don't want to see the knowledge I have pass out of this universe, so I'm sure something will be arranged."

Jenny, meanwhile, was grabbing up Leah's light saber, and made it disappear into her sub-space pocket. The spinning one had dropped when Leah had died, and she took that one too, probably figuring it could come in handy. "I'm ready to go," she announced.

"I'll be right behind you," he told her, getting out the white marble. "You can put energy into this, right?"

"Of course. See you later, Lysanias. It was nice getting to know you." She concentrated and vanished. The marble was gone, but he checked his pouch and found it there again.

"It was nice, meeting you," Ahsoka told him. "Good luck on your travels."

"Thanks. I hope you find that friend of yours out there someplace."

"Oh, I will, I'm sure. You keep yourself safe, okay?"

"I will." Luke waved to him, and Yoda was looking around as if uncertain he should be there at all, but Lysanias wasn't staying another minute here. *If I came here just for the light saber, it wasn't worth it. I got worlds killed here, and I am very happy to leave this place behind. But I suppose we did win, and that's what counts in the end.*

He vanished.